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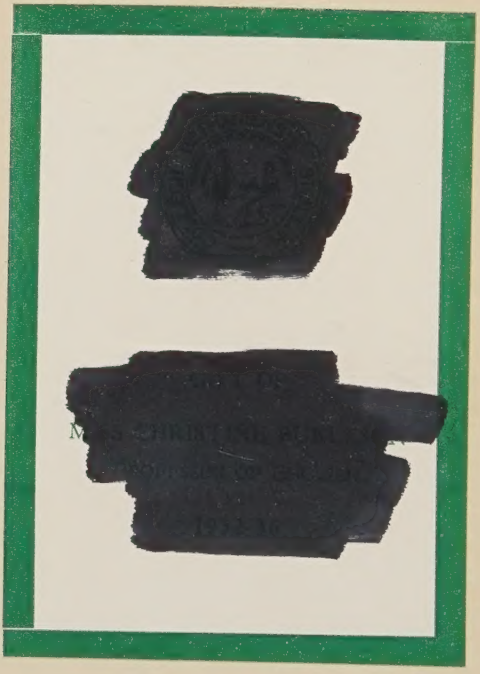

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THE SOUL OF THE CITY

The Soul of the City

AN URBAN ANTHOLOGY

Compiled by
GARLAND GREEVER
AND
JOSEPH M. BACHELOR

Boston and New York
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1923

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The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TO

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

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PREFACE

From the time when our government was founded, the shifting of our population from country to city has been among the most pronounced of social phenomena. In 1790, only 131,472 of our 3,929,214 people — that is, only three and three tenths per cent — lived in places of more than 8000 inhabitants, and there were only six such places in the United States. But cities sprang up in such numbers that by 1920 there were 924 of them and they held 46,307,640 — or forty-three and eight tenths per cent — of our 105,710,620 people. The progression has been fairly steady from decade to decade. A glance at the summarized census returns will show that our urban population has almost doubled its percentage of the total every thirty years. Nor is this fact due solely to the multiplication of cities. It is quite as traceable to the enormous size some of the cities have attained. Vast centers like New York and Chicago shelter each a population more extensive than that of whole groups of sparsely settled States. Were visitors added — and to them also, in a sense, the cities belong — the figures would be truly astounding. It is an often-made and half-credible assertion that if a man but watched long enough at the intersection of Forty-Second Street and Fifth Avenue, he would see, sooner or later, every person on earth he had previously known.

The drift of population to the cities might be considered the result of the newness of life in America were the phenomenon confined to this continent. Such is far from being the case. The same tendency has been manifest in Europe — particularly so since the middle of the eighteenth century. That mechanical inventions and the consequent industrial revolution were an important cause of it admits of no doubt. But our business just now is not to account for the tendency. Our business is rather to reckon with it as a fact, and to observe how general the movement has been and is.

The increase of urban population might be expected to lead to an attitude of increased toleration and love for the city. Has this actually come about? Any conclusion about a matter so intangible should be reached cautiously if at all.

It will help us to form a better judgment if we contrast the attitude toward the city with the attitude toward the country and the country village. Let us glance back a few generations. "God made the country," sang Cowper, "and man made the town." Can we doubt where, in his opinion, virtue and true happiness are most likely to flourish? Goldsmith lamented the decay of the rural village. Wordsworth so unceasingly emphasized the beatitude of those fortunate persons whose character is shaped by benignant nature that his friends twitted him by inquiring whether residents of a city possess a soul at all. Many, many were the voices that proclaimed the innocence and the bliss of countryside

and village, but were raised in solemn warning against the wickedness, the wretchedness, and the

> "Sorrows barricadoed evermore
> Within the walls of cities."

Such, broadly speaking, was the old attitude. Countryside and village were approved, the city was disapproved. How stands the matter to-day? With the countryside none too well. There are, to be sure, a good many exhortations of "back to the land," but they are prefaced with a "go," not a "come." The village is in plight less enviable still. It is neither commended in theory nor voluntarily sought in practice. To most of us, indeed, the small town has become a *bête noire*. How far is the cry from Goldsmith's sweet Auburn to Masters's Spoon River, from Mrs. Gaskell's Cranford to Lewis's Gopher Prairie! On the tradition of the village as embodying the whole category of virtues and miraculously free from the vices, both ordinary folk and the modern school of writers have laid irreverent and realistic hands. All the meanness of great municipalities, assert the writers, may be found in the village, and drab boredom may be found there besides — no escape from monotony, from vulgarity, from hypocrisy, from appalling tyrannies, from deadening uniformity, from interminable pettiness and gossip. And the public shouts, "Just what I said all along!" and buys more copies of these writers' books.

The city, on the other hand, has grown in fascination and popular esteem. And this whether we ap-

proach it through life or through literature. Ask ten men where they wish to live; nine of them, though perhaps berating this or that thing about the city, would make their habitat there. Turn to the literature of our day. Do you find many novels, many poems, that decry the city in the fashion once prevalent? Does not literature, on the contrary, even when it points out the blemishes, represent them as blemishes rather than as types of the whole? Turn from books to the files of magazines, to the literature of presumably a lighter and more ephemeral quality. How many poems do you find denunciatory of the city? how many eulogistic of it or of some of its aspects? Your search will convince you that men like to write about the city, like to read about it. This is one of the notable, one of the outstanding, literary facts of our time.

Perhaps the finest thing ever said about the city was said by a man of the eighteenth century, Dr. Samuel Johnson. "When a man is tired of London," spoke the doughty old sage, "he is tired of life." And with his usual insight he penetrated to causes as well as stated facts: "For there is in London all that life can afford." This hits the mark squarely. A great city is full of evil, but it is also full of good, and, what in this connection is more to the purpose, it is full of contrasts, of life. "Age cannot wither it nor custom stale its infinite variety." It is one of the most poetical things in the universe because it is one of the most vital. A great city *is* a great poem — not a poem by a dapper and correct versifier, but a poem

by a Shakespeare, rough it may be and coarse at times, but filled with nobility and warm with the presence of all humanity.

The city has, of course, haunted the thoughts and imaginations of prose writers too. Some of them, like Thackeray, lay bare its falsenesses and its vanities. Others bear witness to the multitudinous beauty and complexity of it. What portrayal more tremendous than Carlyle's as he looks down from Teufelsdröckh's tower? What panegyric more whole-hearted than Lamb's in a dozen of his essays and letters? But we should even more expect that the soul of the city would stand incarnate and find its revelation in poetry. Nor have the poets failed us. So far from being mere priests of nature, they have from early times been devoted to the city; and in recent years, coincidently with the development of the feeling that nothing life contains is unsuited to poetry, they have more and more made it the subject of literary exploration and exploitation. They have set forth not only its glory and bewildering richness, but also its grimness, its cruelty, its squalor, its terrible isolations. And since the future of man seems sure to be increasingly connected with the city, this growth of intimacy between verse and urban themes is likely to continue.

Strangely enough, no anthology of general city verse has hitherto been compiled. This volume repairs the omission. That out of the mass of available material the ideal selections have invariably been made is too much for the compilers to hope.

But they can at least plead that they have done their best. They have purposely made the standards of selection as flexible as possible. The volume in consequence contains some really great poetry, some that is indubitably good and true, and some of less certain quality that yet helps reveal the soul of the city. Whatever the likes or repugnances of the reader, he will from the number and variety of these pieces inevitably find much that appeals to him.

It may be asked whether any single poem yet written has captured the whole spirit and influence of the city as nearly as the earlier books of the "Prelude" capture those of the country. Despite the age-long interest of the poets in cities and despite the intensification of that interest in our day, it cannot be maintained that any such poem yet exists. Perhaps Whitman has come as close as any one else to writing it. But Whitman, at home as he is with externals and profound as he oftentimes is in reaching essences, lacks Wordsworth's sureness and depth of spirituality. Wordsworth himself, even with that shift of affections which would have been necessary and of which he gave some tantalizing hints, might easily have over-moralized the theme. The great city poem must not be too didactic. And can there be a great city poem in this sense, anyhow? Can the soul of the city be crystallized into one piece as it here is dispersed through an anthology? We need not make our answer dogmatic. The writing of such a poem as compared with the writing of the "Prelude" would be as the composition of an epic to the

composition of a pastoral. It is one of the most stupendous of the "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." Whether it will be attempted and achieved rests with the poets — and on the laps of the gods.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE compilers gratefully acknowledge their indebtedness to the following publishers for the use of copyright poems:

Allen & Unwin, Ltd., for selection from *Towards Democracy*, by Edward Carpenter.

Richard G. Badger for selection by Edith M. Thomas.

Boni & Liveright for selection from *Introducing Irony*, by Maxwell Bodenheim; and selection from *The Cobbler in Willow Street*, by George O'Neil.

Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., for selection from *Collected Poems*, by Alice Meynell.

The Century Company for selections from *War and Laughter*, by James Oppenheim.

George H. Doran Company for selections from *A Banjo at Armageddon*, by Berton Braley; selections from *City Tides*, by Archie Austin Coates; selection from *Candles That Burn*, by Aline Kilmer; selections from *Poems, Essays and Letters*, by Joyce Kilmer; selections from *Hide and Seek*, and *The Rocking Horse*, by Christopher Morley; and selections from *Today and Tomorrow*, and *A World of Windows*, by Charles Hanson Towne.

Doubleday, Page & Company for selections from *Tobogganing on Parnassus*, by Franklin P. Adams; and selections from *Dreams and Dust*, and *Poems and Portraits*, by Don Marquis.

Funk and Wagnalls Company for selection from *Blind Children*, by Israel Zangwill.

Harcourt, Brace & Company for selections from *Carmina, Madrigali*, and *Songs of Wedlock*, by T. A. Daly.

Henry Holt and Company for selections from *Chicago Poems*, by Carl Sandburg; selections from *These Times*, by Louis Untermeyer; and selection from *Factories and other Poems*, by Margaret Widdemer.

Houghton Mifflin Company for selections from *The Shoes That Danced*, by Anna Hempstead Branch; selection from *Poems*, by Florence Earle Coates; selections from *Poems, 1908–1919*, by John Drinkwater; selections from *The Ride Home*, by Florence Wilkinson Evans; selection from *Preludes and Symphonies*, by John Gould Fletcher; selections from *Poems*, by Richard Watson Gilder; selections from *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass*, *Men, Women and Ghosts*, and *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*, by Amy Lowell; selection from *Poems and Plays*, by William Vaughn Moody; selection from *Poems*, by Clinton Scollard; selections from *Poems*, by Frank Dempster Sherman; and selection from *Poems*, by Edmund Clarence Stedman. All of these poems are used by permission of, and special arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company, the authorized publishers.

B. W. Huebsch for selection from *Songs to Save a Soul*, by Irene Rutherford McLeod.

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Mitchell Kennerley for selections from *The Jew to Jesus*, by Florence Kiper Frank; selections from *Earth Cry*, and *Joy o' Life*, by Theodosia Garrison: selection from *The Cry of Youth*, by Harry Kemp; selections from *The Blossomy Bough*, and *The Light Feet of Goats*, by Shaemas O Sheel; and selections from *Manhattan*, and *The Quiet Singer*, by Charles Hanson Towne.

Alfred A. Knopf for selections from *Advice and*

Other Poems, by Maxwell Bodenheim, also for selections by him in *Others: An Anthology of the New Verse;* selection from *Poems*, by T. S. Eliot; selections from *Cobblestones*, by David Sentner; and selections from *Body and Raiment*, by Eunice Tietjens.

John Lane Company for selections from *New Poems*, and *English Poems*, by Richard Le Gallienne; and selections from *The Sailor who has Sailed and Other Poems*, by Benjamin R. C. Low.

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Company for selection from *Dumb in June*, by Richard Burton.

David McKay Company for selections by W. M. Letts; and selections from *Leaves of Grass*, by Walt Whitman.

The Macmillan Company for selections from *Poems of London, and Other Verses*, by John Presland.

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G. P. Putnam's Sons for selection from *The Wingèd Spirit*, by Marie Tudor Garland; and selection from *As the Lark Rises*, by Theodosia Garrison.

Charles Scribner's Sons for selection from *Poems*, by H. C. Bunner; selection from *Collected Poems*, by Eugene Field; and selection from *Collected Poems*, by Alice Meynell.

Thomas Seltzer for selections from *Streets*, by Douglas Goldring; and selection from *When a Soul Sings*, by Philip M. Raskin.

Yale University Press for selection from *Blue Smoke*, by Karle Wilson Baker; selections from *The Falconer of God*, by William Rose Benét; and selection from *Poems*, by Brian Hooker.

The following magazines and periodicals have courteously granted permission to use material from their pages:

The Atlantic Monthly for "On a Subway Express," by Chester Firkins.

The Century Magazine for "Fifth Avenue in Fog," by James Norman Hall; and "The Night Court," by Ruth Comfort Mitchell.

Contemporary Verse for "The Push Cart," by William Rose Benét; "Driving in the Park," by Lucy Jackson; and "The Watchman," by Miriam Vedder.

Everybody's Magazine for "City Windows," by Charlton Lawrence Edholm.

The Forum for "New Love in a Street Car," by Walter Ferris; and "A Street Cry," by Arthur Ketchum.

Good Housekeeping for "A City Sand-Pile" and "A Prayer," by Edmund Leamy.

Harper's Magazine for "A Robin in Wall Street," by Edwin Curran.

The Independent and Weekly Review for "In the Office," by Simon Barr.

The New Republic for "City Rain," by R. V. A. Sheldon.

The New York Evening Post for "On the Passing of the Last Fire Horse from Manhattan Island," by Kenneth Slade Alling.

The New York Sun for "The Street of Little Shops," by Helen Frazee-Bower; "Noon Hour — Lower Broadway," by Edmund Leamy; "In a Park" and "Window Box," by Margaret E. Sangster; "A Cabaret Dancer," by Lewis Worthington Smith; and "Little Garments Dancing on the Line," by Minnie Leona Upton.

Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, for "The City," by Max Endicoff; "Chicago" and "Ellis Park," by Helen Hoyt; "Fifth Avenue Sky-Scrapers," by Alice D. Lippman; and "The City Lights from a Skyscraper," by Frances Shaw.

Scribner's Magazine for "In the Subway," by Malleville Haller; "The Regents' Examination," by Jessie Wallace Hughan; and "The Shadowy City Looms," by Lloyd Mifflin.

The Smart Set for "A New York Skyscraper," by Madison Cawein; and "A Faun in Wall Street," by John Myers O'Hara.

The Strathford Journal for "The Street Cleaner," by Walter Clyde Curry.

The Survey for "From an Elevated Train," by Jean M. Batchelor; and "The City-Dweller," by Bernice Lesbia Kenyon.

The compilers wish to thank the following authors and holders of copyright for permission to use material:

Mary Aldis for "Window-Wishin'," from *Flashlights.*

William Stanley Braithwaite for "Morning in the Market," from *The Poetry Journal.*

Robert Bridges for "London Snow."

Dana Burnet for "From an 'L' Train Window," "Roses in the Subway," "The Hand-Organ Man," and "The Park," from *Poems, 1915.*

Bliss Carman for "On the Plaza."

William C. Edgar for "Charwomen," from *The Bellman.*

Charlton Lawrence Edholm for "The Apartment House," from *Reedy's Mirror.*

Edmund Leamy for poems from many publications

Mary Sinton Leitch for "A Study in Contrasts," from *The Waggon and the Star.*

Joseph Dana Miller for "Trinity Churchyard," from *Leslie's Weekly.*

Ruth Comfort Mitchell for "The Night Court" and "The Subway," from *The Night Court, and Other Poems.*

Ruth Shepard Phelps for "The Subway," from *The Bellman.*

Ella Malone Watson for "Union Square," from *The Collected Poems of Walter Malone.*

John Hall Wheelock for "Rainy Sunday," "Sunday Evening in the Common," and "The Children," from *The Human Fantasy*, and "In the Dark City," from *The Black Panther.*

The compilers gratefully acknowledge letters of permission from the following writers to use material from their books: Mary Aldis, Kenneth Slade Alling, William Rose Benét, Dana Burnet, Richard Burton, Bliss Carman, Edwin Curran, Walter Clyde Curry, T. A. Daly, Mary Carolyn Davies, Charlton Lawrence Edholm, Sara Teasdale Filsinger, Helen Frazee-Bower, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, Hermann Hagedorn, Malleville Haller, Jessie Wallace Hughan, Edmund Leamy, Mary Sinton Leitch, Vachel Lindsay, Alice D. Lippman, Edgar Lee Masters, Joseph Dana Miller, Shaemas O Sheel, Ruth Shepard Phelps, Margaret E. Sangster, Frances Shaw, Lewis Worthington Smith, Charles Hanson Towne, Minnie Leona Upton, Miriam Vedder, Marguerite Wilkinson, and John Hall Wheelock.

The compilers are indebted to Mr. A. A. Bowle for many kindnesses while the book was in press, and especially for his assistance with the indexes.

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THE SOUL OF THE CITY

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

This day into the fields my steps are led.
I cannot heal me there! Row after row,
Thousands of daisies radiantly blow.
They have not brought from Heaven my daily bread!
But they are like a prayer too often said.
I have forgot their meaning, and I go
From the cold rubric of their gold and snow,
And the calm ritual, all uncomforted.
I want the faces! faces! remote and pale,
That surge along the city streets! The flood
Of reckless ones, haggard and spent and frail,
Excited, hungry! In this other mood
'Tis not the words of the faith for which I ail,
But to plunge in the fountain of its living blood.

Anna Hempstead Branch

CITY ROOFS

(*From the Metropolitan Tower*)

Roof-tops, roof-tops, what do you cover?
Sad folks, bad folks, and many a glowing lover;
Wise people, simple people, children of despair—
Roof-tops, roof-tops, hiding pain and care.

Roof-tops, roof-tops, O what sin you're knowing,
While above you in the sky the white clouds are blowing;
While beneath you, agony and dolor and grim strife
Fight the olden battle, the olden war of Life.

Roof-tops, roof-tops, cover up their shame —
Wretched souls, prisoned souls too piteous to name;
Man himself hath built you all to hide away the stars —
Roof-tops, roof-tops, you hide ten million scars.

Roof-tops, roof-tops, well I know you cover
Many solemn tragedies and many a lonely lover;
But ah, you hide the good that lives in the throbbing city —
Patient wives, and tenderness, forgiveness, faith, and pity.

Roof-tops, roof-tops, this is what I wonder:
You are thick as poisonous plants, thick the people under;
Yet roofless, and homeless, and shelterless they roam,
The driftwood of the town who have no roof-top, and no home!

Charles Hanson Towne

THE BARREL-ORGAN [1]

THERE's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
In the City as the sun sinks low;
And the music's not immortal; but the world has made it sweet
And fulfilled it with the sunset glow;
And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the pain
That surround the singing organ like a large eternal light;
And they've given it a glory and a part to play again
In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

And now it's marching onward through the realms of old romance,
And trolling out a fond familiar tune,
And now it's roaring cannon down to fight the King of France,
And now it's prattling softly to the moon,
And all around the organ there's a sea without a shore
Of human joys and wonders and regrets;
To remember and to recompense the music evermore
For what the cold machinery forgets. . . .

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Yes; as the music changes,
Like a prismatic glass,
It takes the light and ranges
Through all the moods that pass;
Dissects the common carnival
Of passions and regrets,
And gives the world a glimpse of all
The colors it forgets.

And there *La Traviata* sighs
Another sadder song;
And there *Il Trovatore* cries
A tale of deeper wrong;
And bolder knights to battle go
With sword and shield and lance,
Than ever here on earth below
Have whirled into — *a dance!* —

Go down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time;
Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)
And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's wonderland;
Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)

The cherry-trees are seas of bloom and soft perfume and sweet perfume,
The cherry-trees are seas of bloom (and oh, so near to London!)

And there they say, when dawn is high and all the world's a blaze of sky
The cuckoo, though he's very shy, will sing a song for London.

The Dorian nightingale is rare and yet they say you'll hear him there
At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London!)
The linnet and the throstle, too, and after dark the long halloo
And golden-eyed *tu-whit, tu-whoo* of owls that ogle London.

For Noah hardly knew a bird of any kind that isn't heard
At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London!)
And when the rose begins to pout and all the chestnut spires are out
You'll hear the rest without a doubt, all chorusing for London: —

Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)
And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's wonderland;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)

And then the troubadour begins to thrill the golden
street,
In the City as the sun sinks low;
And in all the gaudy busses there are scores of weary
feet
Marking time, sweet time, with a dull mechanic
beat,
And a thousand hearts are plunging to a love they'll
never meet,
Through the meadows of the sunset, through the
poppies and the wheat,
In the land where the dead dreams go.

Verdi, Verdi, when you wrote *Il Trovatore* did you
dream
Of the City when the sun sinks low,
Of the organ and the monkey and the many-colored
stream
On the Piccadilly pavement, of the myriad eyes that
seem
To be litten for a moment with a wild Italian gleam
As *A che la morte* parodies the world's eternal theme
And pulses with the sunset-glow?

There's a thief, perhaps, that listens with a face of
frozen stone
In the City as the sun sinks low;
There's a portly man of business with a balance of
his own,
There's a clerk and there's a butcher of a soft repose-
ful tone.

And they're all of them returning to the heavens
they have known:
They are crammed and jammed in busses and —
they're each of them alone
In the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a very modish woman and her smile is very
bland
In the City as the sun sinks low;
And her hansom jingles onward, but her little jew-
elled hand
Is clenched a little tighter and she cannot under-
stand
What she wants or why she wanders to that undis-
covered land,
For the parties there are not at all the sort of thing
she planned,
In the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a rowing man that listens and his heart is
crying out
In the City as the sun sinks low;
For the barge, the eight, the Isis, and the coach's
whoop and shout,
For the minute-gun, the counting and the long di-
shevelled rout,
For the howl along the tow-path and a fate that's
still in doubt,
For a roughened oar to handle and a race to think
about
In the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a laborer that listens to the voices of the dead
In the City as the sun sinks low;
And his hand begins to tremble and his face to smoulder red
As he sees a loafer watching him and — there he turns his head
And stares into the sunset where his April love is fled,
For he hears her softly singing and his lonely soul is led
Through the land where the dead dreams go.

There's an old and haggard demi-rep, it's ringing in her ears,
In the City as the sun sinks low;
With the wild and empty sorrow of the love that blights and sears,
Oh, and if she hurries onward, then be sure, be sure she hears,
Hears and bears the bitter burden of the unforgotten years,
And her laugh's a little harsher and her eyes are brimmed with tears
For the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
In the City as the sun sinks low;
Though the music's only Verdi there's a world to make it sweet

Just as yonder yellow sunset where the earth and heaven meet
Mellows all the sooty City! Hark, a hundred thousand feet
Are marching on to glory through the poppies and the wheat
In the land where the dead dreams go.

So it's Jeremiah, Jeremiah,
What have you to say
When you meet the garland girls
Tripping on their way?

All around my gala hat
I wear a wreath of roses
(A long and lonely year it is
I've waited for the May!)
If any one should ask you,
The reason why I wear it is —
My own love, my true love
Is coming home to-day.

And it's buy a bunch of violets for the lady
(*It's lilac-time in London; it's lilac-time in London!*)
Buy a bunch of violets for the lady
While the sky burns blue above:

On the other side the street you'll find it shady
(*It's lilac-time in London; it's lilac-time in London!*)

But buy a bunch of violets for the lady,
And tell her she's your own true love.

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
In the City as the sun sinks glittering and slow;
And the music's not immortal; but the world has made it sweet
And enriched it with the harmonies that make a song complete
In the deeper heavens of music where the night and morning meet,
As it dies into the sunset-glow;
And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the pain
That surround the singing organ like a large eternal light,
And they've given it a glory and a part to play again
In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

And there, as the music changes,
The song runs round again.
Once more it turns and ranges
Through all its joy and pain,
Dissects the common carnival
Of passions and regrets;
And the wheeling world remembers all
The wheeling song forgets.

Once more *La Traviata* sighs
Another sadder song;

Once more *Il Trovatore* cries
A tale of deeper wrong;
Once more the knights to battle go
With sword and shield and lance
Till once, once more, the shattered foe
Has whirled into — *a dance!*

Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)
And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's wonderland;
Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)

Alfred Noyes

DA COLDA FEET

Da beggarman across da way
Ees happy as can be;
He laugh an' weenk baycause he theenk
He gotta joke on me.

O! my! O! my! how cold eet ees
For stan' on deesa street!
Da weends blow like dey gona freeze
Da shoes upon your feet.
I nevva see een deesa town
So fierce da weentra storm;
I keepa hoppin' up an' down
For mak' my feeta warm.

But beggarman across da way
He stan' against da wall,
So like eet was a summer day;
He ees no cold at all.
Ees justa box een fronta heem
For hold hees teenna cup,
But he bayhava so eet seem
A stove for warm heem up.
An' evra time he look an' see
How colda man am I,
He justa weenk an' laugh at me
So like he gona die!
An' so I leave dees fruita stan'
An' walka 'cross da street
For see how ees dees beggarman
Can keep so warma feet.
I look, an' dere I see da legs
Dat prop heem by da wall
Ees notheeng more dan wooden pegs —
He got no feet at all!

Eef colda feet should mak' you swear
An' growl so bad as me,
I bat your life you would no care
So mooch eef you could see
Da beggarman across da way,
So happy as can be,
Dat laugh an' weenk baycause he theenk
He gotta joke on me!

T. A. Daly

THE CAFÉ SINGER

She shaped her painted smile that night
Before the painted trees,
And postured in her drenching light,
And shrilled her song, to please
The night-worn city faces
With dull indecencies.

And then . . . she nodded from her place
Across the smoke-drugged air
To some old man's attracted face,
Half-drunken in his chair. . . .
And sang him "*Annie Laurie*"
As if green woods were there!

That brave old song of moor-winds keen,
Of heather-breath, and snow,
Of love all-worshipful, and clean
Young faith of long ago. . . .
"*Maxwellton's braes are bonnie!*"
Poor child! How could *she* know?

Margaret Widdemer

THE CITY-DWELLER

These things I cannot forget: far snow in the night,
The shadows of hills, and the leaping beauty of flame,

Wind-patterned leaves, and the patterns of birds in flight,
And the changing thunderous sea that is never the same.

Oh, high are the city walls, and the houses tall,
And only the sky remains of beautiful things,
And there never is time to search the sky at all,
Lest there pass above me the changing pattern of wings.

But youth, clear youth that breathes in my breath to-day,
Chants in my blood that ancient beauty is young,
And sees far snow in the lamp-lit snow of my way,
And shadows of hills where the long wall-shadows are flung.

And flaming fire is lit by the million lights,
And blown smoke gathers as birds, or as leaves wind-free,
And oh, if your eyes are closed in the clamorous nights,
The motion of men resounds like the thundering sea!

Bernice Lesbïa Kenyon

THE CITY

O, DEAR is the song of the pine
When the wind of the night-time blows,
And dear is the murmuring river
That afar through my childhood flows;
And soft is the raindrop's beat
And the fountain's lyric play,
But to me no music is half so sweet
As the thunder of Broadway!

Stream of the living world
Where dash the billows of strife! —
One plunge in the mighty torrent
Is a year of tamer life!
City of glorious days,
Of hope, and labor, and mirth,
With room, and to spare, on thy splendid bays
For the ships of all the earth!

Richard Watson Gilder

THE FLAT-HUNTER'S WAY

WE don't get any too much light;
It's pretty noisy, too, at that;
The folks next door stay up all night;
There's but one closet in the flat;
The rent we pay is far from low;
Our flat is small and in the rear,
But we have looked around, and so
We think we'll stay another year.

Our dining-room is pretty dark;
Our kitchen's hot and very small;
The "view" we get of Central Park
We really do not get at all.
The ceiling cracks and crumbles down
Upon me while I'm working here —
But, after combing all the town,
We think we'll stay another year.

We are not "handy" to the sub;
Our hall-boy service is a joke;
Our janitor's a foreign dub
Who never does a thing but smoke.
Our landlord says he will not cut
A cent from rent already dear;
And so we sought for better — but
We think we'll stay another year.

Franklin P. Adams

A SONG OF BEDFORD STREET

It's a long time ago and a poor time to boast of,
The foolish old time of two young people's start;
But sweet were the days that young love made the most of —
So short by the clock, and so long by the heart!
We lived in a cottage in old Greenwich Village,
With a tiny clay plot that was burnt brown and hard;
But it softened at last to my girl's patient tillage,
And the roses sprang up in our little back yard.

The roses sprang up and the yellow day-lilies;
And heartease and pansies, sweet Williams and stocks,
And bachelors' buttons and bright daffodillies
Filled green little beds that I bordered with box.
They were plain country posies, bright-hued and sweet-smelling,
And the two of us worked for them, worked long and hard;
And the flowers she had loved in her old-country dwelling
They made her at home in our little back yard.

In the morning I dug while the breakfast was cooking,
And went to the shop, where I toiled all the day;
And at night I returned, and I found my love looking
With her bright country eyes down the dull city way.
And first she would tell me what flowers were blooming,
And her soft hand slipped into a hand that was hard,
And she led through the house, till a breeze came perfuming
Our little back hall from our little back yard.

It was long, long ago, and we haven't grown wealthy;
And we don't live in state up in Madison Square:

But the old man is hale, and he's happy and healthy,
And his wife's none the worse for the grey in her hair.
Each year lends a sweeter new scent to the roses;
Each year makes hard life seem a little less hard;
And each year a new love for old lovers discloses —
Come, wife, let us walk in our little back yard!

H. C. Bunner

THE STREET LAMP

Homes stand in slumber. Sleep broods shadowingly
In this deserted street's far-vista'd night,
Save only where a little mortal light
Sheds on the pave its careful boundary
And shines a kindly host on each degree
Of city wraith, where wan street shadows plight
Strange troths. Lost footsteps echo and unite
In a refrain that seems a threnody.

In sweet low laughter of a girl's first tryst,
The sob of homeless poverty, faint cries
Struck dumb, — loud Folly, Mirth the satirist! —
In silence once again Fate's byway lies.
Brave little star, dawn pales, and through the mist
Sadly you wane. How sad, and oh, how wise!

William Rose Benét

VILLAS

All down Jamaica Road there are small bow windows
Jutting out neighborly heads in the street,
And in each sits, framed, a quiet old woman.
These watch the couples who pass or meet,

And some have borne sons, now ageing men;
And most have seen death in their narrow house;
Heard wedding bells for their grandchildren;
Seen boys seek the bar for a last carouse;

And heard wives cry, through thin plaster walls,
And watched babies laugh in the sun, outside.
They treasure things up in their withered old hearts,
And always they sit looking out, with eyes wide.

These queer old women, they watch, as they sit,
Through the whole long day, what happens beneath
They miss not a thing. Sometimes they knit,
And sometimes dream a little, holding their breath.

Douglas Goldring

A WORLD OF WINDOWS

Behind my house are windows,
Each lit with yellow flame,
And each one is a little world
Set in a little frame.

A shop-girl, through her mirror,
Looks at her ashen face.
Below her, in a peignoir
Of shabby, dirty lace,

A woman, stout and lazy,
Sits playing solitaire;
Dishevelled is her ill-lit room,
And tumbled is her hair.

There is one little window
Set high above the rest;
I see the edge of an iron bed,
And a young girl thinly dressed.

Her face is full of sorrow —
One seldom sees her laugh;
Each night she bends above an old
And faded photograph

She takes it from the bureau
In that small, stuffy place;
One evening, I could almost see
The tears upon her face,

When the wild gas-jet flickered
Above her heavy hair.
That whole long night I saw her,
An image of despair,

Beside her tiny window
Gazing at the white moon.

I wondered what her life must be —
Had Love gone by so soon?

A week dragged on; her shutters
Were drawn, as if to hide
The little drama of her world;
And then — one night — she died.

She killed herself. I read the truth,
Hidden among the news —
A little item, stale enough:
How many love — and lose!

Three days — and then another girl
Took up her story there.
Two flights below, a woman still
Sat playing solitaire,

In the same shabby peignoir
Of yellow, dirty lace,
And the poor shop-girl, in her glass,
Looked at her pallid face.

Behind my house are windows,
Each lit with yellow flame;
Each is a world for some one
Who plays the old, old game.

And when one world is emptied,
Through terror or disgrace,
How soon another brave one comes
To fill the vacant place!

Charles Hanson Towne

RAINY SUNDAY

The soft, grey garment of the rushing rain
  Veils in the lonely, Sunday streets afar,
  The passengers sit dumb within the car —
Slow drops slip wearily down the window-pane.

A funeral procession takes its way
  Across the tracks, the car stands still a space,
  All eyes are turned and every anxious face, —
Save one, that laughs oblivious of delay.

Holding her baby close against her breast,
  The heart of love, too glad to comprehend,
  And Life at war with Death until the end,
The mother throned serene amid the rest.

John Hall Wheelock

THE LONESOMEST TIME

The lonesomest time and the lonesomest place
  And the drabbest and dreariest, too,
Is not in a desert of limitless space
Nor the heart of a forest where leaves interlace
  And the owls sound their spooky "To-whoo-oo!"
No, the lonesomest place is a white light café
When the guests and the waiters are all gone away
  And in place of the lights and the babel
There's only the clock-tick, the light from the
    street,

A smell of damp floors and of stale things to eat,
And the sight of the chairs on each table,
The chairs stacked up high on each table.

Why, it's scary to peek through the doorway and see
That dining place empty and dead,
Where, earlier, crowds of gay people would be
With music and chatter and laughter and glee
And the wine glowing, yellow and red.
It's ghostly and spooky and shrouded and grey
When the guests and the waiters have all gone away
And the murk in the corners is sable,
And once you have seen it so gloomy and cold
It never seems quite the same place as of old.
The glamor is vanished, and tarnished the gold,
When the chairs are piled up on each table,
The empty chairs stacked on each table.

Berton Braley

CITY DUSK

The day dies in a wrath of cloud,
Flecking her roofs with pallid rain,
And dies its music, harsh and loud,
Struck from the tiresome strings of pain.

Her highways leap to festal bloom,
And swallow-swift the traffic skims
O'er sudden shoals of light and gloom,
Made lovelier where the distance dims.

Robed by her tiring-maid, the dusk,
The town lies in a silvered bower,
As, from a miserable husk,
The lily robes herself with flower.

And all her tangled streets are gay,
And all her rudenesses are gone;
For, howso pitiless the day,
The evening brings delight alone.

Thomas Burke

CELL-MATES

Aw, quit yer cryin', kid — I know it's tough,
But dearie, shush; nobody's gone to lynch ye;
Later ye'll find th' cops are square enough;
It's always worse the first time that they pinch ye.

Things ain't so bad. Now there, don't take on so.
The matron won't do nothin' if ye shout, dear.
That's right.... Now come an' tell me all ye know....
Ain't ye got nobody to bail ye out, dear?

Well, well —. But that's a shame. A kid so cute
An' young like youse had never ought to worry.
Gee! if they'd doll ye up, ye'd be a beaut —
Why should ye waste yer life in work an' hurry?

Oh, there is lots o' ways it could be did —
'Course I won't do this much for ev'rybody —

I tell ye what, I'm gone to help ye, kid
An' I've got infloonce, if my clo'es is shoddy.

S'posin' that I could get ye out o' here —
Now, now; don't take on like a reg'lar baby —
Yer pretty lucky that ye met me, dear.
What's that? No, not to-night. To-morrow, maybe.

Well's I was sayin', when I leave this hole
I'll get my friend to go to work an' help ye —
Don't breathe this here to any livin' soul,
Fer strangers, dear, is jest the ones to scalp ye.

Now, I've the swellest little flat uptown,
An' jolly — somethin' doin' every minute!
There's always some live people hangin' roun';
Ye'll never want to leave when once ye're in it.

There's lots o' dancin' — jest ye wait an' see
The nifty rags I'll get to fit ye, dearie.
Aw, never mind the thanks — wait till you're free;
This gratitood an' sob stuff makes me weary.

Don't worry now; an' things'll be all right;
Ye'll only see th' folks with happy faces.
There'll be no more o' workin' noon an' night,
An' standin' up all day behind th' laces.

Here's the address. Now, don't ye lose it, dear;
An' come right up — don't stop to primp or tidy.

Gee! but it's lucky that ye met me here....
Let's go to sleep.... Good-night.... an' see ye
Frid'y.

Louis Untermeyer

ELLIS PARK

Little park that I pass through,
I carry off a piece of you
Every morning hurrying down
To my work-day in the town;
Carry you for country there
To make the city ways more fair.
I take your trees,
And your breeze,
Your greenness,
Your cleanness,
Some of your shade, some of your sky,
Some of your calm as I go by;
Your flowers to trim
The pavements grim;
Your space for room in the jostled street
And grass for carpet to my feet.
Your fountains take and sweet bird calls
To sing me from my office walls.
All that I can see
I carry off with me.
But you never miss my theft,
So much treasure you have left.
As I find you, fresh at morning,
So I find you, home returning —

Nothing lacking from your grace.
All your riches wait in place
For me to borrow
On the morrow.

Do you hear this praise of you,
Little park that I pass through?

Helen Hoyt

THE TOM-CAT

At midnight in the alley
A Tom-cat comes to wail,
And he chants the hate of a million years
As he swings his snaky tail.

Malevolent, bony, brindled,
Tiger and devil and bard,
His eyes are coals from the middle of Hell,
And his heart is black and hard.

He twists and crouches and capers
And bares his curved sharp claws,
And he sings to the stars of the jungle nights
Ere cities were, or laws.

Beasts from a world primeval,
He and his leaping clan,
When the blotched red moon leers over the roofs
Give voice to their scorn of man.

He will lie on a rug to-morrow
And lick his silky fur,
And veil the brute in his yellow eyes
And play he's tame, and purr.

But at midnight in the alley
He will crouch again and wail,
And beat the time for his demon's song
With the swing of his demon's tail.

Don Marquis

IN THE CITY

Back at my house, where the village ends
And the furrowed land begins,
God is a music of cello-tones
And satiny violins.

But here, in this maelstrom of opposites,
This passion of splendors and slimes,
The factory chimneys are organ-pipes
And the engine-bells are chimes.

And which is dearer I cannot tell —
My blossomy symphony,
Or the thundering organ that breaks my heart
And sunders my soul from me.

Karle Wilson Baker

ON GRACE CHURCH CORNER

Beneath the stone-flowered, lozenged steeple
In the close-shuttered tower
Mellow-tongued church-bells charm the people
Thronging the hot noon hour.

Above the trucks and clanging cars,
Ambulance, van, and dray,
They chime their slow and certain bars
Ringing our wrongs away.

Here, down at Tenth and Broadway, loom
Dull walls. But liquid notes
Still dream and rhyme and roam and boom
From the bells' iron throats.

And Broadway stretches ever South,
Steep-cliffed, with crawling crowds;
The white dream-tower that blocks its mouth
Climbing against the clouds.

And Thought still stretches like the street
'Twixt obdurate walls and high;
Till, where drear fact and mystery meet,
A white Dream cleaves the sky!

William Rose Benét

IN THE OFFICE

Hour after hour, she rattles at the keys,
With head bent low and furtive smiling lips, —
Blind to the world that through her ribbon slips,
Dreaming girl-dreams, re-living memories.
Hour after hour, the hands of little ease
Know not their soul, — flash from their finger-tips
Strong words that rear a tower or launch great ships
Voyaging for miracles upon strange seas;
Strong worlds that crush in steel and blaze in fire;
Startle a myriad arms; give life to wheels;
Fashion men's destinies and wing desire;
Levy earth's tribute; guide the golden stream; —
She weaves the magic age . . . yet weary feels . . .
Dead monodies . . . and dreams her greater dream.

Simon Barr

THE DRUG CLERK

The drug clerk stands behind the counter
Young and dapper and debonair. . . .

Before him burn the great unwinking lights,
The hectic stars of city nights,
Red as hell's pit, green as a mermaid's hair.
A queer half-acrid smell is in the air.
Behind him on the shelves in ordered rows
With strange, abbreviated names
Dwell half the facts of life. That young man knows,

Bottled and boxed and powdered here,
Dumb tragedies, deceptions, secret shames,
And comedy and fear.

Sleep slumbers here, like a great quiet sea
Shrunk to this bottle's compass; sleep that brings
Sweet respite from the teeth of pain
To those poor tossing things
That the white nurses watch so thoughtfully.
And here again
Dwell the shy souls of Maytime flowers
That shall make sweeter still those poignant hours
When wide-eyed youth looks on the face of love.
And, for those others who have found too late
The bitter fruits thereof,
Here are cosmetics, powders, paints, — the arts
That hunted women use to hunt again
With scented flesh for bait.
And here is comfort for the hearts
Of sucking babes in their first teething pain.
Here dwells the substance of huge fervid dreams,
Fantastic, many-colored, shot with gleams
Of ecstasy and madness, that shall come
To some pale, twitching sleeper in a bunk.
And here is courage, cheaply bought
To cure a blue sick funk,
And dearly paid for in the final sum.
Here in this powdered fly is caught
Desire more ravishing than Tarquin's. . . .
And at last
When the one weary hope is past

Here is the sole escape,
The little postern in the house of breath
Where pallid fugitives keep tryst with death.

All this the drug clerk knows and there he stands,
Young and dapper and debonair . . .
He rests a pair of slender hands,
Much manicured, upon the counter there
And speaks: "No, we don't carry no pomade,
We only cater to the high-class trade."

Eunice Tietjens

A CITY SAND-PILE

Children in a sand-pile
On a dingy street . . .
Building men had left it there,
Little did they think or care
Children small would find it fair
And run with eager feet.

Children in a sand-pile
On a golden day,
Glory! How their eager cries
Filled the city clouded skies
As with unrestrained surprise
They found that they could play.

Children in a sand-pile —
Life seemed all complete!
Never knew they beach, or sea,

Mountain, field, or stream, or tree . . .
God be thanked that yet there be
Sand-piles in the street.

Edmund Leamy

SPARKLES FROM THE WHEEL

WHERE the city's ceaseless crowd moves on the live-long day,
Withdrawn I join a group of children watching, I pause aside with them.

By the curb toward the edge of the flagging,
A knife-grinder works at his wheel sharpening a great knife,
Bending over he carefully holds it to the stone, by foot and knee,
With measur'd tread he turns rapidly, as he presses with light but firm hand,
Forth issue then in copious golden jets,
Sparkles from the wheel.

The scene and all its belongings, how they seize and affect me,
The sad sharp-chinn'd old man with worn clothes and broad shoulder-band of leathers,
Myself effusing and fluid, a phantom curiously floating, now here absorb'd and arrested,
The group (an unminded point set in a vast surrounding),
The attentive, quiet children, the loud, proud. restive bass of the streets,

The low hoarse purr of the whirling stone, the light-press'd blade,
Diffusing, dropping, sideways-darting, in tiny showers of gold,
Sparkles from the wheel.

Walt Whitman

WINDOW BOX

Across the street from me I glimpse
The glow of it. It is as gay
As little songs that children sing —
It calls to me through all the day.
The scarlet buds, the trailing vines,
The drowsy red, half opened flowers,
Are like soft hands to help me through
The loneliness of tired hours.

I wonder at the folk who tend
The window box. . . . Perhaps they know
That it is like a friendly voice
To many passersby below.
Perhaps they know that people pause
To gaze at it with lifted eyes,
And dream a while of lovely things,
Of peace and hope and country skies.

The window box across the street —
The sight of it is always new!
It nestles close upon my heart,
As little acts of kindness do.

Sometimes my soul is filled with cheer,
Reflected from across the way —
Sometimes my lips are curved with smiles
Because the colors are so gay....

Margaret E. Sangster

THE NIGHT COURT

"Call Rose Costara!"
Insolent she comes.
The watchers, practised, keen, turn down their thumbs.
The walk, the talk, the face — that sea-shell tint, —
It is old stuff; they read her like coarse print.
Here is no hapless innocence waylaid.
This is a stolid worker at her trade.
Listening, she yawns, half smiling, undismayed,
Shrugging a little at the law's delay,
Bored and impatient to be on her way.
It is her eighth conviction. Out beyond the rail
A lady novelist in search of types turns pale.
She meant to write of them just as she found them,
And with no tears or maudlin glamour round them,
In forceful, virile words, harsh, true words, without shame,
Calling an ugly thing, boldly, an ugly name;
Sympathy, velvet glove, on purpose, iron hand.
But *eighth conviction!* All the phrases she had planned
Fail; "sullen," "vengeful," no, she isn't that.
No, the pink face beneath the hectic hat

Gives back her own aghast and sickened stare
With a detached and rather cheerful air,
And then the little novelist sees red.
From her chaste heart all clemency is fled.
"Oh, loathsome! venomous! Off with her head!
Call Rose Costara!" But before you stop,
And shelve your decent rage,
Let's call the cop.

Let's call the plain-clothes cop who brought her in.
The weary-eyed night watchman of the law,
A shuffling person with a hanging jaw,
Loose-lipped and sallow, rather vague of chin,
Comes rubber-heeling at his Honor's rap.
He set and baited and then sprung the trap —
The *trap* — by his unsavory report.
Let's ask him why — but first
Let's call the court.

Not only the grim figure in the chair,
Sphinx-like above the waste and wreckage there,
Skeptical, tired of a retold tale,
But the whole humming hive, the false, the frail, —
An old young woman with a weasel face,
A lying witness waiting in his place,
Two ferret lawyers nosing out a case,
Reporters questioning a Mexican,
Sobbing her silly heart out for her man,
Planning to feature her, "lone, desperate, pretty," —
Yes, call the court. But wait!
Let's call the city.

Call the community! Call up, call down!
Call all the speeding, mad, unheeding town!
Call rags and tags, and then call velvet gown!
Go, summon them from tenements and clubs,
On office floors and over steaming tubs!
Shout to the boxes and behind the scenes,
Then to the push carts and the limousines!
Arouse the lecture-room, the cabaret!
Confound them with a trumpet blast and say,
"Are you so dull, so deaf and blind indeed,
That you mistake the harvest for the seed?"
Condemn them for — but stay!
Let's call the code —

That facile thing they've fashioned to their mode:
Smug sophistries that smother and befool,
That numb and stupify; that clumsy thing
That measures mountains with a three-foot rule,
And plumbs the ocean with a pudding string —
The little, brittle code. Here is the root,
Far out of sight and buried safe and deep,
And Rose Costara is the bitter fruit.
On every limb and leaf, death, ruin, creep.

So, lady novelist, go home again.
Rub biting acid on your little pen.
Look back and out and up and in, and then
Write that it is no job for pruning-shears.
Tell them to dig for years and years and years
The twined and twisted roots. Blot out the page;
Invert the blundering order of the age;

Reverse the scheme: the last shall be the first.
Summon the system, starting with the worst —
The lying, dying code! On, down the line,
The city, and the court, the cop. Assign
The guilt, the blame, the shame! Sting, lash,
and spur!
Call each and all! Call us! And *then* call her!

Ruth Comfort Mitchell

FACES [1]

People that I meet and pass
In the city's broken roar,
Faces that I lose so soon
And have never found before,

Do you know how much you tell
In the meeting of our eyes,
How ashamed I am, and sad
To have pierced your poor disguise?

Secrets rushing without sound
Crying from your hiding places —
Let me go, I cannot bear
The sorrow of the passing faces.

— People in the restless street,
Can it be, oh, can it be

[1] From *Flame and Shadow*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

In the meeting of our eyes
That you know as much of me?

Sara Teasdale

THE CITY MOUSE AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE

(Imitation of Horace's Satire, ii. 6. 80 —)

Once on a time (so runs the fable)
A country mouse, right hospitable,
Received a town mouse at his board,
Just as a farmer might a lord.
A frugal mouse upon the whole,
Yet loved his friend, and had a soul,
Knew what was handsome, and would do't,
On just occasion, *coûte qui coûte*,
He brought him bacon (nothing lean),
Pudding that might have pleased a dean;
Cheese, such as men in Suffolk make,
But wish'd it Stilton for his sake;
Yet, to his guest though nothing sparing,
He ate himself the rind and paring.
Our courtier scarce would touch a bit,
But show'd his breeding and his wit;
He did his best to seem to eat,
And cried, "I vow you're mighty neat.
But Lord! my friend this savage scene!
For God's sake come and live with men:
Consider mice, like men, must die,
Both small and great, both you and I:
Then spend your life in joy and sport,
(This doctrine, friend, I learned at court)."

The veriest hermit in the nation
May yield, God knows, to strong temptation,
Away they come, through thick and thin,
To a tall house near Lincoln's-inn;
('Twas on the night of a debate,
When all their Lordships had sat late.)

Behold the place, where if a poet
Shined in description, he might show it;
Tell how the moonbeam trembling falls,
And tips with silver all the walls;
Palladian walls, Venetian doors,
Grotesco roofs, and stucco floors:
But let it (in a word) be said,
The moon was up and men a-bed,
The napkins white, the carpet red:
The guests withdrawn had left the treat,
And down the mice sat *tête-à-tête*.

Our courtier walks from dish to dish,
Tastes for his friend of fowl and fish;
Tells all their names, lays down the law,
"*Que ça est bon! Ah, goutez ça!*
That jelly's rich, this malmsey healing,
Pray dip your whiskers and your tail in."
Was ever such a happy swain?
He stuffs, and swills, and stuffs again.
"I'm quite ashamed — 'tis mighty rude
To eat so much — but all's so good.
I have a thousand thanks to give —
My lord alone knows how to live."

No sooner said, but from the hall
Rush chaplain, butler, dogs, and all:
"A rat, a rat! clap to the door" —
The cat comes bouncing on the floor.
O for the heart of Homer's mice,
Or gods to save them in a trice!
(It was by Providence they think,
For your damn'd stucco has no chink.)
"An't please your honor," quoth the peasant,
"This same dessert is not so pleasant:
Give me again my hollow tree,
A crust of bread, and liberty!"

Alexander Pope

LAVENDER'S FOR LADIES

LAVENDER's for ladies, an' they grows it in the garden;
Lavender's for ladies, and it's sweet an' dry an' blue;
But the swallows leave the steeple an' the skies begin to harden,
For now's the time o' lavender, an' now's the time o' rue!

"Lavender, lavender, buy my sweet lavender,"
All down the street an old woman will cry;
But when she trundles
The sweet-smellin' bundles,
When she calls lavender — swallows must fly!

Lavender's for ladies (Heaven love their pretty faces);
Lavender's for ladies, they can sniff it at their ease,
An' they puts it on their counterpins an' on their pillow-cases,
An' dreams about their true-loves an' o' ships that cross the seas!

"Lavender, lavender, buy my sweet lavender,"
Thus the old woman will quaver an' call
All through the city —
It's blue an' it's pretty,
But brown's on the beech-tree an' mist over all!

Lavender's for ladies, so they puts it in their presses;
Lavender's for ladies, Joan an' Mary, Jill an Jane;
So they lays it in their muslins an' their lawny Sunday dresses,
An' keeps 'em fresh as April till their loves come 'ome again!

"Lavender, lavender, buy my sweet lavender,"
Still the old woman will wheeze and will cry.
Give 'er a copper
An' p'r'aps it will stop 'er,
For when she calls lavender summer must die!

Patrick R. Chalmers

LITTLE GARMENTS DANCING ON THE LINE

Oh, pink and gray,
And scarlet gay,
And snowy white a-shine,
And brown and blue,
And crimson, too,
They dance upon the line!
They dance upon the line,
And they set our hearts a-dancing
Those merry little garments there,
Of shapes and shadès entrancing!

From roof so high
It dares the sky,
From backyard pent and bare,
From "pulley" line,
From clothes reel fine,
They send the wind a dare!
They send the wind a dare,
And it meekly does their pleasure —
Those saucy little garments there,
That dance in merry measure!

The folk so small
Who wear them all
Are folk who skip and hop,
And so you see,
Those garments wee,
Just don't know how to stop!

They don't know how to stop,
And oh, are they not beguiling —
Those little garments dancing there,
To set a stern face smiling!

Minnie Leona Upton

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

SEPTEMBER 3, 1802

EARTH has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

William Wordsworth

THE TOWERS OF MANHATTAN

ON the middle arch of the bridge
I stood,
And mused, as the twilight failed —

The bridge that murmurs and sings,
Swinging between the tides and the skies
Like a harp that the sea-winds sweep —
Night flooded in from the bay,
With billow on billow of shadow and beauty,
With wave upon wave
Of illusion and dusk,
And before me, apparelled in splendor,
Banded with loops of light,
Clothed on with purple and magic,
Rose the tall towers of Manhattan,
Wonderful under the stars.

Whence has this miracle sprung
To challenge the skies?
From the plinth of this girdled island,
Guarded by sentinel waters,
How has this glory arisen?
Whence is the faith,
What is the creed,
That has dowered the dumb brute rock and
the sullen iron
With a beauty so vital,
With a grace so vivid and real?
Whence the strong wings of this lyric that
soars like a song in stone?

For the builders
Builded in blindness;
Little they thought of the ultimate
Uses of beauty!

Little they kenned and nothing they recked
Of the raptures of conscious and masterful art —
They builded as blind as the men who raised
The naïvely blasphemous challenge of Babel —
For they wrought in the sordid humor
Of greed
And the lust of power;
They wrought in the heat of the bitter
Battle for gold;
And some of them ground men's lives for their
mortar,
Taking the conquerors' toll
From the veins and bones of the driven millions—
Of curses and tears they builded,
Cruelty and crime and sorrow —
And behold!
By a baffling magic
Is the work of these builders transmuted
To temples and towers that are crowned
With a glamour transcendent
That lifts up the heart like the smile of a god.

And how has this beauty sprung out of greed?
The dust is the dust, and forever
Receiveth its own;
But the dreams of a man or a people
Forever survive;
These builders, their crimes and their curses,
Their greed and their sordid endeavor,
Lie in the dust,
Dead in the dust,

But the vision, the dream and the glory
Remain.

Triumphantly over all
Rises the secret hope,
Rises the baffled illusion,
Rises the broken dream
That hid in the heart of the conquered,
That dwelt in the conqueror's breast —
By the side of each man as he labored,
Unseen and unknown
Labored his dream —

Now, eminent,
Fronting the morning,
Mysterious,
Clothed with the night,
Rises the crushed aspiration,
The unconscious and scarcely articulate prayer,
Rises the faith forgotten,
Rises the spurned ideal,
Triumphs the god denied,
Conquers the creed betrayed,
Rises the broken spirit.
All flowering in visible, durable marvel of stone
and of steel,
Miraculous under the heavens,
Wonderful under the stars.

Mock at the gods if you will,
Even forget their existence,

But always they labor in secret
To bring to a sudden and golden achievement
their subtle intentions —
And lo! from the dung a lily!
A temple out of the clay!
A city out of a rabble!
And behold
The strong hands of Manhattan
Mightily lifted up
And grasping the gold of the sunset
For a crown for her head!

Don Marquis

ROSES IN THE SUBWAY

A WAN-CHEEKED girl with faded eyes
Came stumbling down the crowded car,
Clutching her burden to her breast
As though she held a star.

Roses, I swear it! Red and sweet
And struggling from her pinched white hands,
Roses . . . like captured hostages
From far and fairy lands!

The thunder of the rushing train
Was like a hush. . . . The flower scent
Breathed faintly on the stale, whirled air
Like some dim sacrament —

I saw a garden stretching out
And morning on it like a crown —

And o'er a bed of crimson bloom
My mother . . . stooping down.
Dana Burnet

THE PEDDLER [1]

I PEDDLES pencils on Broadway.
I know it ain't a great career.
It's dull an' footless — so folks say —
And yet I've done it twenty year,
Held down my same old corner here
An' never missed a day.

I peddles, an' I watch the crowd.
I knows 'em — all they say an' do —
As if they shouted it out loud.
I look 'em through an' through an' through!
By crabs! they'd kill me if they knew —
They are so fine an' proud.

I knows 'em! Oh, it's in their eyes,
It's in their walk, it's in their lips!
They tries to bluff it — but I'm wise!
An' they're just children when you strips
The smirk off; an' the clerks, the chips,
Stands clean of all the lies.

I've watched so long, I scarcely see
The clo'es — it's just the faces now.

[1] From *Poems and Ballads*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Somehow I knows their misery,
An' wonders — when? An' where? An' how?
Elbow an' shoulder — on they plough —
An' yet somehow they speaks to me.

I'm like the priest — an' all day long
They tells me what they've thought an' done.
An' some is flabby, some is strong,
An' some of 'em was dead an' gone
Before they ever saw the sun. . . .
I know where some of 'em belong.

I peddles pencils. Christ! An' they?
They does the things that seems worth while.
I watch 'em growin' old an' gray,
An' queer about the eyes, an' smile
To see 'em when they've made their pile,
A-totterin' up Broadway.

Hermann Hagedorn

PAN IN WALL STREET

Just where the Treasury's marble front
Looks over Wall Street's mingled nations;
Where Jews and Gentiles most are wont
To throng for trade and last quotations;
Where, hour by hour, the rates of gold
Outrival, in the ears of people,
The quarter-chimes, serenely tolled
From Trinity's undaunted steeple, —

Even there I heard a strange, wild strain
Sound high above the modern clamor,
Above the cries of greed and gain,
The curbstone war, the auction's hammer;
And swift, on Music's misty ways,
It led, from all this strife for millions,
To ancient, sweet-do-nothing days
Among the kirtle-robed Sicilians.

And as it stilled the multitude,
And yet more joyous rose, and shriller,
I saw the minstrel, where he stood
At ease against a Doric pillar:
One hand a droning organ played,
The other held a Pan's-pipe (fashioned
Like those of old) to lips that made
The reeds give out that strain impassioned.

'Twas Pan himself had wandered here
A-strolling through this sordid city,
And piping to the civic ear
The prelude of some pastoral ditty!
The demigod had crossed the seas, —
From haunts of shepherd, nymph, and satyr,
And Syracusan times, — to these
Far shores and twenty centuries later.

A ragged cap was on his head;
But — hidden thus — there was no doubting
That, all with crispy locks o'erspread,
His gnarléd horns were somewhere sprouting;

His club-feet, cased in rusty shoes,
Were crossed, as on some frieze you see them,
And trousers, patched of divers hues,
Concealed his crooked shanks beneath them.

He filled the quivering reeds with sound,
And o'er his mouth their changes shifted,
And with his goat's-eyes looked around
Where'er the passing current drifted;
And soon, as on Trinacrian hills
The nymphs and herdsmen ran to hear him,
Even now the tradesmen from their tills,
With clerks and porters, crowded near him.

The bulls and bears together drew
From Jauncey Court and New Street Alley,
As erst, if pastorals be true,
Came beasts from every wooded valley;
The random passers stayed to list, —
A boxer Ægon, rough and merry,
A Broadway Daphnis, on his tryst
With Nais at the Brooklyn Ferry.

A one-eyed Cyclops halted long
In tattered cloak of army pattern,
And Galatea joined the throng, —
A blowsy, apple-vending slattern;
While old Silenus staggered out
From some new-fangled lunch-house handy,
And bade the piper, with a shout,
To strike up Yankee Doodle Dandy!

A newsboy and a peanut girl
Like little Fauns began to caper:
His hair was all in tangled curl,
Her tawny legs were bare and taper;
And still the gathering larger grew,
And gave its pence and crowded nigher,
While aye the shepherd-minstrel blew
His pipe, and struck the gamut higher.

O heart of Nature, beating still
With throbs her vernal passion taught her, —
Even here, as on the vine-clad hill,
Or by the Arethusan water!
New forms may fold the speech, new lands
Arise within these ocean-portals,
But Music waves eternal wands, —
Enchantress of the souls of mortals!

So thought I, — but among us trod
A man in blue, with legal baton,
And scoffed the vagrant demigod,
And pushed him from the step I sat on.
Doubting I mused upon the cry,
"Great Pan is dead!" — and all the people
Went on their ways: — and clear and high
The quarter sounded from the steeple.

Edmund Clarence Stedman

ON A SUBWAY EXPRESS

I, who have lost the stars, the sod,
For chilling pave and cheerless light,
Have made my meeting-place with God
A new and nether Night —

Have found a fane where thunder fills
Loud caverns, tremulous; — and these
Atone me for my reverend hills
And moonlit silences.

A figment in the crowded dark,
Where men sit muted by the roar,
I ride upon the whirring Spark
Beneath the city's floor.

In this dim firmament, the stars
Whirl by in blazing files and tiers;
Kin meteors graze our flying bars,
Amid the spinning spheres.

Speed! speed! until the quivering rails
Flash silver where the head-light gleams,
As when on lakes the Moon impales
The waves upon its beams.

Life throbs about me, yet I stand
Outgazing on majestic Power;
Death rides with me, on either hand,
In my communion hour.

You that 'neath country skies can pray,
Scoff not at me — the city clod; —
My only respite of the Day
Is this wild ride — with God.

Chester Firkins

A SONG FOR GROCERS

Heaven bless grocers' shops wherein
Raisins are with tawny skin,
Murrey wine, and green liquers,
Curious spice in canisters,
Honest ham, and mother tea,
Isinglass and carroway,
Rennet, vinegar, and salt
That honor has, and clear cobalt:
Coffee, that swart Mussulman,
Caviar the Caspian,
Suave oil, angry condiments,
Anchovies, and sweet essence
Of clove and almond, honeycomb,
Jam our English orchards from,
Portly cheeses full of mould,
Sugars and treacles brown or gold;
Soap, to keep us pure, and white
Candles, the slim sons of light,
Butter like the flow'r of gorse,
Wheat meal fine and oat meal coarse,
Soda for our maid's service,
Sago, tapioca, rice

An economic trinity,
Bacon, friend ham's affinity.
Bananas, which the People please,
Proletarian oranges,
While of fruits in syrup a
Frequent cornucopia.
Eggs fresh within and white without,
Cocoa of origin devout,
Nuts and string and brooms and mops,
Saveloys and lollipops —
God, be good to grocers' shops!

Sherard Vines

IN LADY STREET

All day long the traffic goes
In Lady Street by dingy rows
Of sloven houses, tattered shops —
Fried fish, old clothes and fortune-tellers —
Tall trams on silver-shining rails,
With grinding wheels and swaying tops,
And lorries with their corded bales,
And screeching cars. "Buy, buy!" the sellers
Of rags and bones and sickening meat
Cry all day long in Lady Street.

And when the sunshine has its way
In Lady Street, then all the grey
Dull desolation grows in state
More dull and grey and desolate,
And the sun is a shamefast thing,

A lord not comely-housed, a god
Seeing what gods must blush to see,
A song where it is ill to sing,
And each gold ray despiteously
Lies like a gold ironic rod.

Yet one grey man in Lady Street
Looks for the sun. He never bent
Life to his will, his travelling feet
Have scaled no cloudy continent,
Nor has the sickle-hand been strong.
He lives in Lady Street; a bed,
Four cobwebbed walls.

But all day long
A time is singing in his head
Of youth in Gloucester lanes. He hears
The wind among the barley-blades,
The tapping of the woodpeckers
On the smooth beeches, thistle-spades
Slicing the sinewy roots; he sees
The hooded filberts in the copse
Beyond the loaded orchard trees,
The netted avenues of hops;
He smells the honeysuckle thrown
Along the hedge. He lives alone,
Alone — yet not alone, for sweet
Are Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

Aye, Gloucester lanes. For down below
The cobwebbed room this grey man plies

A trade, a colored trade. A show
Of many-colored merchandise
Is in his shop. Brown filberts there,
And apples red with Gloucester air,
And cauliflowers he keeps, and round
Smooth marrows grown on Gloucester ground.
Fat cabbages and yellow plums,
And gaudy brave chrysanthemums.
And times a glossy pheasant lies
Among his store, not Tyrian dyes
More rich than are the neck-feathers;
And times a prize of violets,
Or dewy mushrooms satin-skinned
And times an unfamiliar wind
Robbed of its woodland favor stirs
Gay daffodils this grey man sets
Among his treasure.

All day long
In Lady Street the traffic goes
By dingy houses, desolate rows
Of shops that stare like hopeless eyes.
Day long the sellers cry their cries,
The fortune-tellers tell no wrong
Of lives that know not any right,
And drift, that has not even the will
To drift, toils through the day until
The wage of sleep is won at night.
But this grey man heeds not at all
The hell of Lady Street. His stall
Of many-colored merchandise

He makes a shining paradise,
As all day long chrysanthemums
He sells, and red and yellow plums
And cauliflowers. In that one spot
Of Lady Street the sun is not
Ashamed to shine and send a rare
Shower of color through the air;
The grey man says the sun is sweet
On Gloucester lanes in Lady Street.

John Drinkwater

THE BIG DRAYS

Up and down on West Street the big drays go —
Wagonloads of merchandise passing to and fro,
Up from ships, and down to ships, regular as song,
Ceaselessly and endlessly the whole day long.

Some bear but prosaic things, sacks to fill the hold,
Flour and wheat and cotton things worth a miser's gold;
Others from the deep sea ships — fruits of foreign lands,
Spices, scents and ivory, gems and silken bands.

Copra, pearl and coffee bean, chiles, hides and wax,
Sisal, cedar, ebony, cocoa, rubber, flax,
Motor cars, machinery, iron, rails and steel,
Music, mirrors, microscopes, rope and rickshaw wheel.

But outward freight or inward freight, borne by straining teams,
Each amid the merchandise holds its load of dreams —
Little, lonely, wistful dreams from many a restless breast
For the incense laden Orient or the new lands of the West.

Edmund Leamy

THE STREET CLEANER

My old friend Bill who sweeps the street
At the corner of Broad and Thirty-four
Has worked there forty years and more
(In age he's going on four score,
His figure stooped, his long hair hoar);
In winter storms and summer heat
He toils to keep his corner neat.

He piles the filth in little heaps,
Banana peels and peanut shells,
Dust and dung-hills, dirty smells,
(The homes of microbes, human hells!),
Then scoops it in his rolling wells;
And when that's done, he smiles and sweeps,
Goes hobbling home, tired out, and sleeps.

One time, he says, the President
(Twelve years ago, come the first of May)
Left other streets to ride that way;
A royal prince in high array

Passed up and down his street one day;
And a beggar, old and blind and bent,
Comes begging there to pay his rent.

For forty years he's watched parades
With heroes marching brave ahead
To join the ranks of those who've bled;
Processions, marriages, the dead
By grieving friends packed off the bed;
But daylight passes, twilight fades,
He waits in peace the falling shades.

He's orthodox, my old friend Bill,
Believes in heaven, palm-leaf fans,
Robes and haloes, Beuhla-lands,
Limpid streams and crystal strands;
And when he's folded here his hands,
God willing, he'll be sweeping still
The Golden Street up Heaven's Hill.

Walter Clyde Curry

CLARE MARKET

In the market of Clare, so cheery the glare
Of the shops and the booths of the tradespeople there;
That I take a delight on a Saturday night
In walking that way and in viewing the sight.
For it's here that one sees all the objects that please —
New patterns in silk and old patterns in cheese,

For the girls pretty toys, rude alarums for boys,
And baubles galore while discretion enjoys —
But here I forbear, for I really despair
Of naming the wealth of the market of Clare.

A rich man comes down from the elegant town
And looks at it all with an ominous frown;
He seems to despise the grandiloquent cries
Of the vender proclaiming his puddings and pies;
And sniffing he goes through the lanes that disclose
Much cause for disgust to his sensitive nose;
And free of the crowd, he admits he is proud
That elsewhere in London this thing's not allowed.
He has seen nothing there but filth everywhere,
And he's glad to get out of the market of Clare.

But the child that has come from the gloom of the slum
Is charmed by the magic of dazzle and hum;
He feasts his big eyes on the cakes and the pies,
And they seem to grow green and protrude with surprise
At the goodies they vend and the toys without end —
And it's oh! if he had but a penny to spend!
But alas, he must gaze in a hopeless amaze
At the treasures that glitter and torches that blaze —
What sense of despair in this world can compare
With that of a waif in the market of Clare?

So, on Saturday night, when my custom invites
A stroll in old London for curious sights,
I am likely to stray by a devious way
Where goodies are spread in a motley array,
The things which some eyes would appear to despise
Impress me as pathos in homely disguise,
And my battered waif-friend shall have pennies to
spend
So long as I've got 'em (or chums that will lend);
And the urchin shall share in my joy and declare
That there's beauty and good in the market of Clare.

Eugene Field

MOUNTED POLICE

Watchful, grave, he sits astride his horse,
Draped with his rubber poncho, in the rain;
He speaks the pungent lingo of "The Force,"
And those who try to bluff him, try in vain.

Inured to every mood of fool and crank,
Shrewdly and sternly all the crowd he cons:
The rain drips down his horse's shining flank,
A figure nobly fit for sculptor's bronze.

O knight commander of our city stress,
Little you know how picturesque you are!
We hear you cry to drivers who transgress:
"*Say, that's a helva place to park your car!*"

Christopher Morley

DA LEETLA BOY

Da spreeng ees com'; but oh, da joy
  Eet ees too late!
He was so cold, my leetla boy,
  He no could wait.

I no can count how manny week,
How manny day, dat he ees seeck;
How manny night I seet an' hold
Da leetla hand dat was so cold.
He was so patience, oh, so sweet!
Eet hurts my throat for theenk of eet;
An' all he evra ask ees w'en
Ees gona com' da spreeng agen.
Wan day, wan brighta sunny day,
He see, across da alleyway,
Da leetla girl dat's livin' dere
Ees raise her window for da air,
An' put outside a leetla pot
Of — w'at-you-call? — forgat-me-not.
So smalla flower, so leetla theeng!
But steell eet mak' hees hearta seeng:
"Oh, now, at las', ees com' da spreeng!
Da leetla plant ees glad for know
Da sun ees com' for mak' eet grow.
So, too, I am grow warm and strong."
So lika dat he seeng hees song.
But, ah! da night com' down an' den
Da weenter ees sneak back agen,

An' een da alley all da night
Ees fall da snow, so cold, so white,
An' cover up da leetla pot
Of — w'at-you-call? — forgat-me-not.
All night da leetla hand I hold
Ees grow so cold, so cold, so cold!

Da spreeng ees com'; but oh, da joy
  Eet ees too late!
He was so cold, my leetla boy,
  He no could wait.

T. A. Daly

BROOKLYN BRIDGE AT DAWN

Out of the cleansing night of stars and tides,
  Building itself anew in the slow dawn,
  The long sea-city rises: night is gone,
Day is not yet; still merciful, she hides
Her summoning brow, and still the night-car glides
  Empty of faces; the night-watchmen yawn
  One to the other, and shiver and pass on,
Nor yet a soul over the great bridge rides.

Frail as a gossamer, a thing of air,
  A bow of shadow o'er the river flung,
    Its sleepy masts and lonely lapping flood;
Who, seeing thus the bridge a-slumber there,
  Would dream such softness, like a picture hung,
    Is wrought of human thunder, iron and blood?

Richard Le Gallienne

BROADWAY [1]

THIS is the quiet hour; the theaters
Have gathered in their crowds, and steadily
The million lights blaze on for few to see,
Robbing the sky of stars that should be hers.
A woman waits with bag and shabby furs,
A somber man drifts by, and only we
Pass up the street unwearied, warm and free,
For over us the olden magic stirs.
Beneath the liquid splendor of the lights
We live a little ere the charm is spent;
This night is ours, of all the golden nights,
The pavement an enchanted palace floor,
And Youth the player on the viol, who sent
A strain of music through an open door.

Sara Teasdale

SERVANT GIRL AND GROCER'S BOY

HER lips' remark was: "Oh, you kid!"
Her soul spoke thus (I know it did):

"O king of realms of endless joy,
My own, my golden grocer's boy,

I am a princess forced to dwell
Within a lonely kitchen cell,

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[1] From *Rivers to the Sea*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

While you go dashing through the land
With loveliness on every hand.

Your whistle strikes my eager ears
Like music of the choiring spheres.

The mighty earth grows faint and reels
Beneath your thundering wagon wheels.

How keenly, perilously sweet
To cling upon that swaying seat!

How happy she who by your side
May share the splendors of that ride!

Ah, if you will not take my hand
And bear me off across the land,

Then, traveller from Arcady,
Remain awhile and comfort me.

What other maiden can you find
So young and delicate and kind?"

Her lips' remark was: "Oh, you kid!"
Her soul spoke thus (I know it did).

Joyce Kilmer

THE EVENING RAIN

O THE rain of the evening is an infinite thing,
As it slowly slips on the motionless pavement;
Greasy and grey is the rain of the evening,
As it dribbles into the dirty gutters
And slides down the drains with a roar!

Ragged men cower
Under the doorways:
Umbrellas nod like drowsy birds.
Bat-umbrellas,
Teetering, balancing,
Where will you spread your wings to-night?

Tangled between the factory-chimneys,
I have seen the golden lamps wake this evening:
Spinning and whirling, darting and dancing,
Tangled with the glittering rain.

Omnibuses lurch
Heavily homeward
Elephants tinselled in tawdry gold:
Taxicabs fight
Like wild birds squalling,
Wild birds with roaring, clattering wings.

O the rain of the evening is an infinite thing,
As it shivers to jewel-heaps spilt on the pavement.
The façades frown gloomily at its beauty,
The façades are dreaming of the day.

With rippling, curling,
Serpentine convolutions
The pavements drip with drunken light.
Crimson and gold,
Shot with opal,
They glare against the sullen night.

O the rain of the evening is an infinite thing
As it slowly dries on the dirty pavement.
Red low-browed clouds jut over the sky:
And in the cool sky there are stars.

John Gould Fletcher

FIFTH AVENUE IN FOG

The winter breath of ocean, cool and clean,
Comes floating high and drifting down
Into the lights of town.
The sins of streets are hidden in a mist
Pale yellow, shot with topaz, amethyst;
Houses old and harsh and mean,
The veriest hags in conscious ugliness,
Are garmented in luminous loveliness,
Veils of thinnest lawn
Billowing over their feet and over their shoulders
drawn.

Here on the splendid avenue
I swear but a moment ago there stood
Ten thousand tons of steel and stone and wood,
With a thousand lights aflare

Story upon story. All are gone.
Blown away like the wraith of a dream
Into upper air,
With a thousand lamps agleam.

True is the fine illusion, true!
The ponderous, leaden world
So stubborn to resist,
Is melted by the magic of the mist.
The elements disintegrate and shift,
They mingle and surge and flow;
Sudden the whole vast city swings adrift
And knows not where to go.

James Norman Hall

THE LITTLE FRUIT SHOP

The little Broadway fruit-shop bursts and glows
Like a stained-glass window rioting through the gloom
Of a grim façade; a garden over-seas;
A Syracusan idyl; a lilt that flows
In chords of dusk-red color; emerald bloom
Loved by the nightingale, voice of the voiceless trees;
Ripe orchards mellow with innumerable bees.

A dark Greek boy counts up with supple hands
Lucent rotundities, the Bacchic grape
In luscious pyramids, pears like a lute
Most musically curved, nuts from sweet lands

Demeter lost; oh, many a sculptured shape; —
Had he his panther-skin, the thyrsus and the lute, —
Lo, a swart faun-god mid his votive fruit.

Florence Wilkinson Evans

A SONG OF STREETS

Now Broadway is an excellent street to a heart for folly yearning;
Fifth Avenue is clad in silk and cultured and sedate;
A million and one are welcome indeed to homeward feet returning —
But the finest of all is an old-time street that lies by the city gate.

It lolls about in a leisurely way though thick with traffic teeming,
Close to its bosom it holds the docks where deep sea steamers lie,
And lumbering men with rolling step, and eyes of distant dreaming
Wander its length and talk strange talk to the wonder of passers-by.

There are queer old shops, and curious things from the windows hail you greeting —
Fifth Avenue has shops, of course, but none as quaint as these,
And where on Broadway is there to find though long your glance or fleeting
So many things that smack of the salt and the far-off travelled seas?

There's a tarry smell, a wanderlust smell, and whenever the wind is blowing
The perfume of the open sea comes pungent on the air;
And staid old buildings watch with the eyes of dignity the going
And coming of ships and of sailor men from the harbours of everywhere.

And Broadway is an excellent street to a heart for folly yearning;
Fifth Avenue is clad in silk and walks with grace and ease;
And hundreds of streets are welcome indeed to homeward feet returning —
But the finest of all is the old-time street that leads to the Seven Seas.

Edmund Leamy

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;

Bright volumes of vapor through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven: but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade:
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colors have all passed away from her eyes!

William Wordsworth

A LONDON THOROUGHFARE — 2 A.M.

They have watered the street,
It shines in the glare of lamps,
Cold, white lamps,
And lies
Like a slow-moving river,
Barred with silver and black.
Cabs go down it,
One,
And then another.
Between them I hear the shuffling of feet.
Tramps doze on the window-ledges,
Night-walkers pass along the sidewalks.
The city is squalid and sinister,
With the silver-barred street in the midst,

Slow-moving,
A river leading nowhere.

Opposite my window,
The moon cuts,
Clear and round,
Through the plum-coloured night.
She cannot light the city;
It is too bright.
It has white lamps,
And glitters coldly.

I stand in the window and watch the moon.
She is thin and lustreless,
But I love her.
I know the moon,
And this is an alien city.

Amy Lowell

SPRING IN OXFORD STREET

A DASH of rain on the pavement,
In the air a gleam of sun,
And the clouds are white, and rolling high
From Marble Arch all down the sky
— And that's the spring begun!

The sky is all a-shining
With sunniest blue and white,
The flags are streaming out full cry
As the crisp north wind comes bustling by,
And all the roofs are bright.

And all the shops and houses
Of sunlit Oxford Street,
— Pearl grey behind amber, gold by rose —
To grey the long perspective goes;
Till all the houses meet.

And there, in every gutter,
The glory of spring flowers.
The whole long street with color fills
And across the yellow daffodils
Sharp sunshine and soft showers.

And among the drabs and greys and browns
Of folk going to and fro
Are trays of violets, darkly bright,
And yellow, like the spring noon's light,
Pale primrose bunches show.

There's blue in every puddle,
And every pane of glass
Has a thousand little dancing suns,
— And up and down the glad news runs,
That spring has come to pass.

John Presland

BLASPHEMY

Overhead the shamefaced stars
Softly scan the street below
Where shops in splendor sparkle,
Where the signs of theatres dazzle,

As along the gleaming highway
Head-lights come and tail-lights go.

Timidly the Dawn creeps in
And the blasphemed Sun mounts high
Beating vainly on the windows
Of tall buildings where the workers
Count the debits and the credits
Under lamps with greenish shades.

David Sentner

MORNING IN THE MARKET

(*Williamsburg Bridge*)

ALOFT, the ponderous arches of the bridge
Shut out the sky and shed a gloom,
Deep as a Rembrandt background, o'er the scene.
Above is tumult; — sudden beat of hoofs, the whir
of wheels,
Hoarse-throated whistles, bells the answering
clang, —
And beneath all else, like roll of sea far-distant,
The ceaseless monotone of passing feet,
Restless, insurgent as a rising tide.
Dim figures, half perceived amid the haze,
Cross and re-cross, dart swiftly to and fro,
Like to the flotsam in an eddying pool,
While sulphurous flames, from cressets leaping high,
Brighten and darken, rise and fall again.
Booths flash to light, heaped high with humble
wares,

Ranged and assorted with a jealous care,
Guarded and tended each by servitor devout,
Strong-beaked, swart-tinted, lean and eager-eyed,
Here shows the silvery sheen of dull-eyed fish,
In cool confusion on each other strewn;
There, the red cheeks of apples and the tawny
brown
Of chestnuts, breathing of their forest home.
Here glows the moulten gold of oranges, and there
The paler tones of lemons and of limes.
Here bloom the grapes, empurpled, and, beyond,
The cabbage flaunts her varying shades of green,
With lettuce, onions, and the savoury leek.
Choice of gay stuffs there lacks not here, —
Chintzes and cottons, gaudy cloths and scarves.
In this far corner, where the torch flares high,
A shimmering row of pots and pans is seen;
And there, above, a mimic garden grows,
Aglow with paper flowers of every hue.
O'er this rough counter, piled with odorous tea,
Weird characters, like magic signs, are writ,
And, weird as they, the merchant of the stall,
White-bearded, prophet-eyed, and gaberdined.
Women, with shawls loose-dropped from ebon locks,
Chaffer and bargain in the crowded mart,
And everywhere a strange rough tongue is heard,
Like to no other that our ears have known,
Kin to the speech that on the Shinar plain,
Confused was heard when Babel's tower arose.

Nora Archibald Smith

IN A CERTAIN RESTAURANT[1]

These diners should have sat for old Franz Hals,
For all their faces are as round as moons,
Glowing with jovial warmth and creased with smiles
At the turbulent clatter of many forks and spoons.

There is no music and no cabaret —
China and linen both are coarse and plain —
But food there is, such stout and honest food
As tells a body he has not dined in vain.

Behind a bar three corpulent men in white
Are opening oysters, one by one by one,
Laying them delicately on beds of ice,
Friendly and slow, as if they think it fun.

Far back in the room there is a mighty grill
Ruddy with fire, clouded with fragrant steam,
Where ducks and chickens and other gentry turn
Over and over in a drowsy dream.

And through the air come speeding plates piled high
With giant potatoes, opened, foamy white,
Genial, impressive beefsteaks, lobsters pink
As coral beads, and pastry crisp and light.

This is the place of plenty I like best.
I watch Manhattan burghers and their wives

[1] From *Bluestone*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Eating tremendously, as all men should,
To please their palates and to save their lives.

No finicky fashion, no satiety,
No smirking gesture, and no sour debate
Trouble these diners. They are one with life,
Now for a while, though inarticulate.

Such excellent food demands much company
Oh, to go out with friendly haste and find
The hungriest hungry souls and dine them here —
It would be good to entertain mankind!

Marguerite Wilkinson

HUNTINGTON STREET — BROOKLYN

Huntington Street is a little street,
It's far from stylish and scarcely neat,
It starts at a dock and ends in a ditch;
You may go from one end, I don't care which,
Right to the other end all the way
And you won't find much that is bright or gay.
But the little houses on Huntington Street
Are a pleasant sight for the eyes to greet,
Being old and simple and quaint and strong,
As they long stood and will stand long,
Each content with its cozy place
And showing the world a cheerful face.

Now surely it was this sturdy smile
Which the little old houses wear all the while

That lured the lean trees of Huntington Street
To hurry and hasten the Spring to greet,
With little green leaves spread out in the sun,
Ere any trees elsewhere had begun.
O first of all in the city's gray
They started their green dance one fine day,
And there wasn't in all the North so sweet
A spot as dingy Huntington Street,
Looking end to end, and I don't care which,
Where it starts in a dock or ends in a ditch.

Shaemas O Sheel

TO A NEW YORK SHOP-GIRL DRESSED FOR SUNDAY

To-day I saw the shop-girl go
Down gay Broadway to meet her beau.

Conspicuous, splendid, conscious, sweet,
She spread abroad and took the street.

And all that niceness would forbid,
Superb, she smiled upon and did.

Let other girls, whose happier days
Preserve the perfume of their ways,

Go modestly. The passing hour
Adds splendor to their opening flower.

But from this child too swift a doom
Must steal her prettiness and bloom,

Toil and weariness hide the grace
That pleads a moment from her face.

So blame her not if for a day
She flaunts her glories while she may.

She half perceives, half understands,
Snatching her gifts with both her hands.

The little strut beneath the skirt
That lags neglected in the dirt,

The indolent swagger down the street —
Who can condemn such happy feet!

Innocent! vulgar — that's the truth!
Yet with the darling wiles of youth!

The bright, self-conscious eyes that stare
With such hauteur, beneath such hair!
Perhaps the men will find me fair!

Charming and charmed, flippant, arrayed,
Fluttered and foolish, proud, displayed,
Infinite pathos of parade!

The bangles and the narrowed waist —
The tinseled boa — forgive the taste!
Oh, the starved nights she gave for that,
And bartered bread to buy her hat!

She flows before the reproachful sage
And begs her woman's heritage.

Dear child, with the defiant eyes,
Insolent with the half surmise
We do not quite admire, I know
How foresight frowns on this vain show!

And judgment, wearily sad, may see
No grace in such frivolity.

Yet which of us was ever bold
To worship Beauty, hungry and cold!

Scorn famine down, proudly expressed
Apostle to what things are best.

Let him who starves to buy the food
For his soul's comfort find her good,

Nor chide the frills and furbelows
That are the prettiest things she knows.

Poet and prophet in God's eyes
Make no more perfect sacrifice.

Who knows before what inner shrine
She eats with them the bread and wine?

Poor waif! One of the sacred few
That madly sought the best they knew!

Dear — let me lean my cheek to-night
Close, close to yours. Ah, that is right.

How warm and near! At last I see
One beauty shines for thee and me.

So let us love and understand —
Whose hearts are hidden in God's hand.

And we will cherish your brief Spring
And all its fragile flowering.

God loves all prettiness, and on this
Surely his angels lay their kiss.

Anna Hempstead Branch

MAISONNETTES

The houses in Windermere Street are let off in floors,
Which perhaps is the reason it always seems so to "swarm."
Little groups of girls and young men gather round its front doors
And keen eyes at all windows observe who is "coming to harm."

Every one in the street knew at once about poor Lizzie Brown!
They saw the young chap she took up with, and "knew how 'twould be";

And they know why the blinds of the house at the corner are down,
And who pays the second floor's rent, at a hundred and three.

Douglas Goldring

AROUND THE CORNER

Around the corner I have a friend,
In this great city that has no end;
Yet days go by, and weeks rush on,
And before I know it a year is gone,
And I never see my old friend's face,
For Life is a swift and terrible race.
He knows I like him just as well
As in the days when I rang his bell
And he rang mine. We were younger then,
And now we are busy, tired men:
Tired with playing a foolish game,
Tired with trying to make a name.
"To-morrow," I say, "I will call on Jim,
Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
But to-morrow comes — and to-morrow goes,
And the distance between us grows and grows.

Around the corner! — yet miles away. . . .
"Here's a telegram, sir." . . .
"*Jim died to-day.*"
And that's what we get, and deserve in the end:
Around the corner, a vanished friend.

Charles Hanson Towne

STREET MUSIC

THERE comes an old man to our street,
Dragging his knobby, lame old feet,
Once a week he comes and stands,
A concertina in his hands,
There in the gutter stops and plays,
No matter fine or rainy days
— Very humble and very old —
Pavement's for them who make so bold!
Prim starched nurses, and ladies fair
With taffeta dresses and shining hair,
And gay little children, who break and run
To give him a penny — he seems to feel
(Out-at-elbows and out-at-heel)
That they've a right to the morning sun;
And so with gnarled old hands he'll play
For an hour, perhaps, then take his way,
Dragging his knobby, lame old feet
In the gutter of this quiet street.
There is no grudging in his eyes,
Nor anger, nor the least surprise
At the uneven scales of fate:
Glad of the sun, against the rain
Hunching his shoulders, age and pain
He takes as his appointed state,
And stands, like Lazarus, at the door
With the dread humility of the poor.

John Presland

TWO WOMEN ON A STREET

This street is callous apathy
In a scale of greys and browns.
Its black roof-line suggests
Flat bodies unable to rise.
Even its screams are listlessness
Having an evil dream.
Its air is swarthy rawness
Troubled with ash cans and cellars.

An old woman ambles on
With a black bag that seems part of her back,
And a candidly hawk-like face.
She croons a smothered lullaby
That sifts a flitting roundness
Into her sharply parted face.
Then she surrenders her hand
To the welter of a garbage can.
A hugely wilted woman slinks by
With a cracked stare on her face.
Her eyes are beaten discs
Of the lamplight's ghastly keenness.
She glides away as though the night
Were a lover flogging her;
Glides into the callous apathy
Of this street, like one who cringes
Happily into her lover's hallway.

Maxwell Bodenheim

FACES

Every morning on my way to work
I see faces,
Myriads of faces; God, what faces!
Blotched, dead-eyed and gaunt faces —
Faces with fear in them (they have seen something
of which they dare not think),
Faces, young women's faces, with joy, with desire,
and pain, and love in them —
And they have in them that which I cannot under-
stand;
I can only look and marvel at those faces.

And young men's faces, some vacant with the
emptiness of dull wit,
Some sinister with thoughts that I do not express —
And I see some faces dreamily reviewing the yester-
night,
Some keenly alert at the world about them,
Some gazing questioningly into to-morrow.

Yes, and some are drawn faces, haunted faces —
They tell of scourging, and repressed senses,
And forbidden impulses, bridled. Futile faces!
And old men's faces, books of human history,
Bearing the tales of a thousand battles.

The old faces are like poems,
And every hollow, every wrinkle the strophe of a
psalm.

All about me faces —
Faces mingled in the woven chant of a world-chorus,
Faces like multitudinous spirit-wraiths abroad —

Oh, faces, who has not read your legend?
And yet, who dares to read your legend?

Archie Austin Coates

THE TRYST

According to tradition
The place where sweethearts meet
Is meadowland and hillside,
And not the city street.
Love lingers when you say it
By lake and moonlight glow:
The poets all O.K. it —
It may be better so!

And yet I keep my trysting
In the department stores:
I always wait for Emma
At the revolving doors.
It might dismay the poets,
And yet it's wholly true —
My heart leaps when I know it's
My Emma, pushing through!

It may be more romantic
By brook or waterfall,
Yet better meet on pavement
Than never meet at all:

I want no moon beguiling,
No dark and bouldered shore,
When I see Emma smiling
And twirling through the door!

Christopher Morley

GERANIUMS [1]

Stuck in a bottle on the window-sill,
In the cold gaslight burning gaily red
Against the luminous blue of London night,
These flowers are mine: while somewhere out of sight
In some black-throated alley's stench and heat,
Oblivious of the racket of the street,
A poor old weary woman lies in bed.

Broken with lust and drink, blear-eyed and ill,
Her battered bonnet nodding on her head,
From a dark arch she clutched my sleeve and said:
"I've sold no bunch to-day, nor touched a bite . . .
Son, buy six-penn'orth: and 'twill mean a bed."

So, blazing gaily red
Against the luminous deeps
Of starless London night,
They burn for my delight:
While somewhere, snug in bed,
A worn old woman sleeps.

[1] From *Borderlands and Thoroughfares*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

And yet to-morrow will these blooms be dead
With all their lively beauty; and to-morrow
May end the light lusts and the heavy sorrow
Of that old body with the nodding head.
The last oath muttered, the last pint drained deep,
She'll sink, as Cleopatra sank, to sleep;
Nor need to barter blossoms for a bed.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

THE LAUGHING WOMAN

Once I heard a woman laughing —
Not like laughter of the women you have heard;
Syllables whose beauty blinds you, and reminds you
Of a brook in sunlight, or a sweet, leaf-hidden bird.
There is laughter that is human
Though shot through with notes of pain —
And then there is that laughter of an old, old, evil woman,
Raising red and burning mists within the brain.

In the mad, gin-reeking dance-hall,
Through the brainless oaths and shrieks, above the smoke
Of stale tobacco, burning to man's yearning
For the swinish, acrid incense — high and shrill her babbling broke.
There is laughter that is human
Though its poignance starts our tears —
And then there is a laughter like the laughter of that woman,
Freezing hearts, and ringing raucous in our ears.

There were mingled in her laughter
Girlish love-words, wittold curses, jests obscene.
And the dancers swarmed around her, sunk profounder
In their beastly, battening stupor — love grown loathly and unclean.
There is laughter — bitter-human
Though it sears us hot and deep —
And then there is a laughter like the laughter of that woman,
Worse than all the ghastly nightmares known to sleep.

Old gray hair, that had been honored
In a life less foul than this, less mad with lust —
Gray hair, defiled, polluted, the refuted
Boast of Man, the world's white banner dragged and trampled in the dust!
There is laughter that is human,
Though the painfullest, the harshest — yes — and then —
And then there is the laughter of that old, old, evil women.
And life still crawls with maggots — that were men!

William Rose Benét

ON MORRIS STREET

To-day I saw a dragon-fly on Morris Street,
A small thing, a gay thing, with whirring wings and fleet,

And up it went and down it went, as lost as lost could be,
Searching for the sunny grass and wind in shady tree.

But never blade of perfumed grass, and never shadowy glen,
And never song of care-free bird from out the streets of men,
And never sign to point the way back to where there lie
The green fields, the wide fields under God's blue sky.

And so it flew, a lost thing, with whirring wings and fleet,
A timid thing, a frightened thing, along the dingy street;
And oh, I wished to show to it the laughing trail I know
To the gay fields, the green fields, where my own heart would go.

Edmund Leamy

THE APARTMENT HOUSE

People above and next door,
People below and all 'round,
I see them and hear their voices,
Rub shoulders with them in the hall,
Yes (you might say) eat with some,

For I smell, almost taste, their cooking.
But know them?
Not one.
A thin wall separates us
From all the life of each other:
Love and marriage and birth,
Shame and death and despair,
How near they come! — To the wall.
But the wall
Might well be the continent's width.
Strangers they are, and I
A stranger among them; a stranger.
Even in prison, they say,
The convicts are better neighbors.
The tap-tap-tap on the pipes
Sends message from cell to cell.
The prisoners know each other,
Tap out "Good luck" to the going,
And cheer the condemned in the death-house.
But we let the doomed depart
Without even lifting an eyebrow.

Charlton Lawrence Edholm

NEW LOVE IN A STREET CAR

Such stolid faces! Do folks sit and stare
Thus always, heavy-eyed?
These women have known love!
Have passed beyond the portals of love's house
And dwelt within, where many things are known,
Yet sit here prim and dull, with no least gleam

Of all the mysteries that love has taught
To give a little radiance to their eyes!

If I had passed that strange, sweet gate, and known
Love's intimate nights and days,
And all the sacred beauties of his house,
Would not my eyes be full of secret lights,
And my lips curve with little lurking smiles,
Remembering dear caresses?
Would not my very presence breathe a sense
Of warmth and splendor?
Or should I sit here dull and heavy-eyed?

Walter Ferris

CHICAGO

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders.

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have seen your painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.
And they tell me you are crooked, and I answer, Yes, it is true I have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.
And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is:

On the faces of women and children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this my city, and I give them back the sneer and say to them:

Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.

Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job, here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft cities;

Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a savage pitted against the wilderness,

Bareheaded,
Shoveling,
Wrecking,
Planning,
Building, breaking, rebuilding,

Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,

Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,

Laughing even as an ignorant fighter who has never lost a battle,

Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and under his ribs the heart of the people,

Laughing!

Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be

Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and Freight Handler
to the Nation.

Carl Sandburg

THE CITY

Not mine with infancy's film'd eyes
To greet first light from past thy towers,
That soar and dream in stainless skies,
Nor heard I first thy chime told hours:
Far, far from here my childhood morn —
But here was I reborn.

Not mine to taste the keen, salt spray,
That tingling smites thy downward face —
That stirs the blood, that breaks the fray
Of life, in street and marketplace,
Where, wearied, none be soon outworn!
But here was I reborn.

Here where 'twas given to indraw
The air of larger freedom, yet
To know the closer bond of law,
Here where Fate's lusty blows are met,
But not the pinprick and the thorn —
Here where I was reborn!

In million beating hearts (thine own),
A one pulsed world-heart first I felt;
Then down upon thy paving stone,
In thankfulness, I could have knelt,

At one with all — of selfhood shorn —
Here where I was reborn!

Dear unto each his native earth,
Renascent life thou gavest me,
O city of my glad rebirth!
I am thy native; shut from thee
What but an exile most forlorn,
I who was here reborn!

Let who will count thee but as part
Of this wide land — I, in my soul
(More in the gravure on my heart)
Proclaim thee greater than the whole!
I am thy patriot. Do not scorn
Thy singer here reborn.

Edith M. Thomas

THE SUBWAY

Broadway roars above my head,
China seethes below,
As I — swiftly, strangely sped —
Through the dark earth go.

Barks are riding on the sea,
Air-ships skim the blue:
Iron chariots carry me
These dim caverns through.

Underneath the churchyard old,
Next the quiet dead,

Rushing past we stir their mould,
Shake their ancient bed.

Underneath the river now!
Waters of the sea
Cleft by some great ship's smooth prow
Sweeping over me!

Dante, pilgrimaging where
Lucifer was hurled,
Journeyed not thus debonair
Through the underworld!

. . . . . .

Thus I mused as on we swept
Forty fathoms down.
Then, my journey done, I stept
Out into the town.

Ruth Shepard Phelps

THE HOTEL [1]

The long resounding marble corridors, the shining parlors with shining women in them.

The French room, with its gilt and garlands under plump little tumbling painted Loves.

The Turkish room, with its jumble of many carpets and its stiffly squared un-Turkish chairs.

The English room, all heavy crimson and gold, with spreading palms lifted high in round green tubs.

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[1] From *You and I*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

The electric lights in twos and threes and hundreds, made into festoons and spirals and arabesques, a maze and magic of bright persistent radiance.

The people sitting in corners by twos and threes, and cooing together under the glare.

The long rows of silent people in chairs, watching with eyes that see not while the patient band tangles the air with music.

The bell-boys marching in with cards, and shouting names over and over into ears that do not heed.

The stout and gorgeous dowagers in lacy white and lilac, bedizened with many jewels, with smart little scarlet or azure hats on their grey-streaked hair.

The business men in trim and spotless suits, who walk in and out with eager steps, or sit at the desks and tables, or watch the shining women.

The telephone girls forever listening to far voices, with the silver band over their hair and the little black caps obliterating their ears.

The telegraph tickers sounding their perpetual chit — chit-chit from the uttermost ends of the earth.

The waiters, in black swallow-tails and white aprons, passing here and there with trays of bottles and glasses.

The quiet and sumptuous bar-room, with purplish men softly drinking in little alcoves, while the

barkeeper, mixing bright liquors, is rapidly plying his bottles.

The great bedecked and gilded café, with its glitter of a thousand mirrors, with its little white tables bearing gluttonous dishes whereto bright forks, held by pampered hands, flicker daintily back and forth.

The white-tiled, immaculate kitchen, with many little round blue fires, where white-clad cooks are making spiced and flavored dishes.

The cool cellars filled with meats and fruits, or layered with sealed and bottled wines mellowing softly in the darkness.

The invisible stories of furnaces and machines, burrowing deep into the earth, where grimy workmen are heavily laboring.

The many-windowed stories of little homes and shelters and sleeping-places, reaching up into the night like some miraculous, high-piled honey-comb of wax-white cells.

The clothes inside of the cells — the stuffs, the silks, the laces; the elaborate disguises that wait in trunks and drawers and closets, or bedrape and conceal human flesh.

The people inside of the clothes, the bodies white and young, bodies fat and bulging, bodies wrinkled and wan, all alike veiled by fine fabrics, sheltered by walls and roofs, shut in from the sun and stars.

The soul inside of the bodies — naked souls; souls weazen and weak, or proud and brave; all

imprisoned in flesh, wrapped in woven stuffs, enclosed in thick and painted masonry, shut away with many shadows from the shining truth.

God inside of the souls, God veiled and wrapped and imprisoned and shadowed in fold on fold of flesh and fabrics and mockeries; but ever alive, struggling and rising again, seeking the light, freeing the world.

Harriet Monroe

ON THE PLAZA

One August day I sat beside
A café window open wide
To let the shower-freshened air
Blow in across the Plaza, where
In golden pomp against the dark
Green leafy background of the Park,
St. Gaudens' hero, gaunt and grim,
Rides on with victory leading him.

The wet, black asphalt seemed to hold
In every hollow pools of gold,
And clouds of gold and pink and grey
Were piled up at the end of day,
Far down the cross street, where one tower
Still glistened from the drenching shower.

A weary white-haired man went by,
Cooling his forehead gratefully

After the day's great heat. A girl
Her thin white garments in a swirl
Blown back against her breasts and knees,
Like a Winged Victory in the breeze,
Alive and modern and superb,
Crossed from the circle to the curb.

We sat there watching people pass,
Clinking the ice against the glass,
And talking idly — books or art,
Or something equally apart
From the essential stress and strife
That rudely form and further life.
Glad of a respite from the heat,
When down the middle of the street,
Trundling a hurdy-gurdy, gay
In spite of the dull stifling day,
Three street-musicians came. The man,
With hair and beard as black as Pan,
Strolled on one side with lordly grace,
While a young girl tugged at a trace
Upon the other. And between
The shafts there walked a laughing queen,
Bright as a poppy, strong and free.
What likelier land than Italy
Breeds such abandon? Confident
And rapturous in mere living spent
Each moment to the utmost, there
With broad, deep chest and kerchiefed hair,
With head thrown back, bare throat, and waist
Supple, heroic, and free-laced,

Between her two companions walked
This splendid woman, chaffed and talked,
Did half the work, made all the cheer
Of that small company.

No fear
Of failure in a soul like hers
That every moment throbs and stirs
With merry ardor, virile hope,
Brave effort, nor in all its scope
Has room for thought or discontent,
Each day its own sufficient vent
And source of happiness.

Without
A trace of bitterness or doubt
Of life's true worth, she strode at ease
Before those empty palaces
A simple heiress of the earth,
And all its joys by happy birth,
Beneficent as breeze or dew,
As fresh as though the world were new
And toil and grief were not. How rare
A personality was there!

Bliss Carman

SKY IN THE CITY

The business man striking his monthly balance
Looked through his office window —
The sky is a bank
And the stars are its fortune.

The poet on the roof of his boarding house —
The sky is a garden of phosphorescent flowers.

Sitting on a park bench with her gentleman friend,
Mamie said:
"Look at that bunch of stars in the sky.
Ain't it awful pretty!"

David Sentner

FIFTH AVENUE

Seasons bring nothing to this gulch
Save a harshly intimate anecdote
Scrawled, here and there, on paint and stone.
The houses shoulder each other
In a forced and passionless communion.
Their harassed angles rise
Like a violent picture-puzzle
Hiding a story that only ruins could reveal;
Their straight lines, robbed of power,
Meet in dwarfed rebellion.
Sometimes they stand like vastly flattened faces
Suffering ants to crawl
In and out of their gaping mouths.
Sometimes, in menial attitudes
They stand like Gothic platitudes
Slipshodly carved in dark brown stone.
Tarnished solemnities of death
Cast their transfigured hue on this avenue.
The cool and indiscriminate glare
Of sunlight seems to desecrate a tomb,

And racing people seem
A stream of accidental shadows.
Hard noises strike one's face and make
It numb with momentary reality,
But the noiseless undertone returns
And they change to unreal jests
Made by death.

Maxwell Bodenheim

THE HAND-ORGAN MAN

He stands in his rags at the sun-spattered curb,
A swarthy brown fellow of tatters and smiles,
Above his black curls are the vagabond skies,
The light of his long journeying lurks in his eyes,
And over his shoulder are yesterday's miles. . . .

His coat it is broken, his airs are outworn,
Yet somehow we pause on the sidewalk to hear —
The children come running, with May in their feet,
To dance to his tunes in the clattering street,
And Age at its window looks down with a tear.

So out of the clamor and toil of the day
The Organ-Man comes, with a nondescript tune,
A smile in his eyes where the world's wisdoms are,
A heart in his breast like a struggling star —
And over his shoulder a garment of June.

Lord of the Summer, come up from the South!
Come, little Organ-Man, come to my street,
Play me old Aprils of sunlight and rain;
Play me the long-ago Springtimes again!
Play . . . till the world is once more at my feet!

Dana Burnet

A NEW YORK SKYSCRAPER

Enormously it lifts
Its towers against the splendor of the west;
Like some wild dream that drifts
Before the mind, and at the will's behest, —
Enchantment-based, gigantic steel and stone, —
Is given permanence;
A concrete fact,
Complete, alone,
Glorious, immense,
Such as no nation here on earth has known:
Epitomizing all
That is American, that stands for youth,
And strength and truth;
That's individual,
And beautiful and free, —
Resistless strength and tireless energy.

Even as a cataract,
Its superb fact
Suggests vast forces Nature builds with — Joy,
And Power and Thought,
She to her aid has brought

For eons past, will bring for eons yet to be,
Shaping the world to her desire: the three
Her counsellors constantly,
Her architects, through whom her dreams come
true, —
Her workmen, bringing forth,
With toil that shall not cease,
Mountains and plains and seas,
That make the Earth the glory that it is:
And, one with these,
Such works of man as this,
This building, towering into the blue,
A beacon, round which like an ocean wide,
Circles and flows the restless human tide.

Madison Cawein

SKY-SIGNS

This is the hour when the city
puts off its glittering scales of sunlight
on a thousand panes,
and lays aside the rumbling shackles of its
preoccupations,
and draws about itself
veils and the quiet shimmer of mists.

The sinking sun
spreads upward through the darkening air
a fan of silver radiance.
And as the rumble and hum dies down
into the pearly row of lamps along the quay

and the gleam, here and there, of lighted windows,
sky-signs of silver gilt,
like pale fire-works threaded on a mesh of wire,
begin to ripple and fling,
over and over and over again,
kittens that play with skeins of stars
and eagles flapping flaming wings
across the soft subsiding plumes of steam
in the chimney pots.

I watch the sun sink,
and the sky-signs turn their silver gilt to gold;
while higher than they,
higher than the teeth of the sky-scrappers even,
a fleet of swollen clouds blown out of the sea
steers into the West.

Like a file of sails laid trim for a secret harbor,
like a fleet of misty far-voyaging sails,
the billowy, darkly distended clouds
slide, filling and sagging
over the white and gold pulsations of the sky-signs.

. . . . . .

Frederick Mortimer Clapp

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

(*Extracts from the Diaries of a Country Woman and a City Woman*)

(CITY WOMAN)

THE First of February.

Snow and ice
Are holding all the city in a vice

Of cursèd quiet at the season's height.
No matinee! No tea! No bridge to-night!
And this the sunny South!

(COUNTRY WOMAN)

The snow and hail
Induced my trees last night to take the veil.
With reverent heads they stand as tho they were
A sainted congregation bowed in prayer.
I love this nunnery, with the winter hush
Upon it!

(CITY WOMAN)

Fifth of February.
This slush
Is so unhealthy! Delicate Annette
Has been house-bound for days. How she does fret!

(COUNTRY WOMAN)

I believe the snow is sent like Santa Claus
Just for the children. It has been the cause
To-day of such a frolic! We've been shaking
The trees to save their laden boughs from breaking,
And many a merry snow-storm of our making
Has fallen on an unsuspicious head.
The children came in tingling, rosy-red.

(CITY WOMAN)

March Fifth.
I took Annette to see a show: —
The child must be amused, and so we go

To "movies," tho "soul mates" and soulful kisses
Are all too educational, I know,
For little girls of eight. I hope she misses
At such a picture half the meaning of it.

(COUNTRY WOMAN)

Arbutus! I'm so glad my children love it!
All six of them and I had searched together
The morning long, because we thought this weather
Might coax it out. We found some, shy and pink,
In the dead leaves. What could I do but sink
Down on the earth (tho my own secret this)
And touch the dear wee blossoms with a kiss?

(CITY WOMAN)

March Tenth.
The spring has come! Gwen Vanderloo
Appeared in a straw hat — a fine one too,
With a real bird of Paradise. I'm weary
Of winter clothes, they look so drab and dreary!
I'm glad the spring has come.

(COUNTRY WOMAN)

The spring! The spring!
I knew it by the sudden quickening
Of one bright bluebird's long-expectant wing:
Besides, I asked him, and his answer duly
Came with the sweet assurance — "Tru-ly! Tru-ly!"

(CITY WOMAN)

April the First.
It's raining. What a pity!

I can't go shopping in this deluged city.
I must sit moping here until it clears.

(COUNTRY WOMAN)

When April, the light-hearted, sheds her tears
They seem like laughter! I have watched all day
The long bright busy needles of the rain
Stitching in Nature's wide-spread counterpane
Patterns of flowers to deck the bed of May.
I think these April showers wash every stain
Of age from Earth, making her young again.

(CITY WOMAN)

May the Fifteenth.
Gwen Vanderloo is dead!
She lived too hard and fast, the doctors said.
The trouble was exhaustion. What a whirl
This life is! Young and care-free as a girl,
She's gone! The funeral is to-day. I'll send
A wreath of lilies, but I must attend
Two meetings first, and I'll invite a friend
To lunch to cheer me up. I must not waste
A single minute, I am in such haste!
They'll put Gwen in the city cemetery:
It's bare and cold, but fashionable — very.
I do hope nobody will tell Annette
That Gwen is dead, she fears death so, the pet!

(COUNTRY WOMAN)

Our kind old neighbor, Ellen Jones, is dead.
Why grieve? Or why regret? Her life was led

In useful leisure and in busy peace
Among her flowers, beneath her sheltering trees.
I took the children, wishing them to see
How lovely and how tender death can be.
Cedars may mourn, but let the holly wave
Its happy scarlet flags above her grave!

Mary Sinton Leitch

DRIVING IN THE PARK

Say! but the sun is shinin' bright!
And don't the sky look nice and blue?
And the trees are green — I guess the dew
Was a heavy one last night.

The river's pretty windin' there
And sparklin' in the mornin' sun,
An' automobiles are on the run
Whizzin' and flyin' everywhere.

God! but I'm tired! I like this ridin';
My shoes are worn through to my feet —
Like ridin'! Two cops along the seat
Would make some feel like hidin'!

I ain't been fed a day or more;
I'm sort of hazy why I'm took —
God! but the Park has a pretty look!
I ain't never ridden here before.

Lucy Jackson

THE MESSENGER BOY

When he goes whistling down the street —
His eyes are young and young his feet —
He does not know the words that stand
Like rows of flame within his hand.
He casually rings the bell
Of 42, where all is well,
And waits there in the vestibule,
Where it is hushed and clean and cool;
A careless lad who does not guess
The words he brings bring emptiness,
Bring sorrow and engulfing tears,
And change the smooth march of the years.
The door is opened. Nevermore
Will one pass through that friendly door.
White fingers tear the envelope,
White fingers through the message grope.
There is a cry, a sound of feet. . . .
A boy goes whistling down the street.

Charles Hanson Towne

A WISH

(*An Apartmental Ditty*)

Mine be a flat beside the Hill;
A vendor's cry shall soothe my ear.
A landlord shall present his bill
At least a dozen times a year.

The tenor, oft, below my flat,
Shall practise "Violets" and such;

And in the area a cat
Shall beat the bands, the cars, and Dutch!

Around the neighborhood shall be
About a hundred thousand kids;
And, eke in that vicinitee,
Ten pianolas withou: lids.

And mornings, I suppose, by gosh,
I'll be awakened prompt at seven,
By ladies hanging up the wash
Only a mile or so from heaven.

The sparrows that have built their nest
Ten feet from where one takes one's rest,
And 'gin their merry, blithesome song
Each morning — quenchless, clear and strong
Promptly at four o'clock.

Franklin P. Adams

FIRST O SONGS FOR A PRELUDE

First O songs for a prelude,
Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum pride and joy in my city,
How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue,
How at once with lithe limbs unwaiting a moment she sprang,
(O superb! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless!
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis! O truer than steel!)

How you sprang — how you threw off the costumes
of peace with indifferent hand,
How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum
and fife were heard in their stead,
How you led to the war (that shall serve for our
prelude, songs of soldiers),
How Manhattan drum-taps led.

Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers parading,
Forty years as a pageant, till unawares the lady of
this teeming and turbulent city,
Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her incalculable
wealth,
With her million children around her, suddenly,
At dead of night, at news from the south,
Incens'd struck with clinch'd hand the pavement.

A shock electric, the night sustain'd it,
Till with ominous hum our hive at daybreak pour'd
out its myriads.
From the houses then and the workshops, and
through all the doorways,
Leapt they tumultuous, and lo! Manhattan arming.

To the drum-taps prompt,
The young men falling in and arming,
The mechanics arming (the trowel, the jack-plane,
the blacksmith's hammer, tost aside with
precipitation,)
The lawyer leaving his office and arming, the judge
leaving the court,

The driver deserting his wagon in the street, jumping down, throwing the reins abruptly down on the horses' backs,
The salesman leaving the store, the boss, bookkeeper, porter, all leaving;
Squads gather everywhere by common consent and arm,
The new recruits, even boys, the old men show them how to wear their accoutrements, they buckle the straps carefully,
Outdoors arming, indoors arming, the flash of the musket barrels,
The white tents cluster in camps, the arm'd sentries around, the sunrise cannon and again at sunset,
Arm'd regiments arrive every day, pass through the city, and embark from the wharves,
(How good they look as they tramp down to the river, sweaty, with their guns on their shoulders!
How I love them! How I could hug them, with their brown faces and their clothes and knapsacks cover'd with dust!)
The blood of the city up — arm'd! arm'd! the cry everywhere,
The flags flung out from the steeples of churches and from all the public buildings and stores,
The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son kisses his mother,
(Loth is the mother to part, yet not a word does she speak to detain him,)

The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen preceding, clearing the way,
The unpent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the crowd for their favorites,
The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold, drawn along, rumble lightly over the stones,
(Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,
Soon unlimber'd to begin the red business;)
All the mutter of preparation, all the determin'd arming,
The hospital service, the lint, bandages and medicines,
The women volunteering for nurses, the work begun for in earnest, no mere parade now;
War! an arm'd race is advancing! the welcome for battle, no turning away;
War! be it weeks, months, or years, an arm'd race is advancing to welcome it.

Mannahatta a-march — and it's O to sing it well!
It's O for a manly life in the camp.
And the sturdy artillery,
The guns bright as gold, the work for giants, to serve well the guns,
Unlimber them! (no more as the past forty years for salutes for courtesies merely,
Put in something now besides powder and wadding).

And you lady of ships, you Mannahatta,
Old matron of this proud, friendly turbulent city

Often in peace and wealth you were pensive or
covertly frown'd amid all your children,
But now you smile with joy exulting old Manna-
hatta.

Walt Whitman

THE SHADOWY CITY LOOMS

(*New York from the North River*)

In deepening shades the haunting vision swims;
A denser greyness settles o'er the stream;
The domes are veiled; the wondrous City dims —
Dims as a dream:

The night transforms it to a palace vast
Lit with a thousand lamps from cryptic wires;
The vaporous walls are phantoms of the Past,
Strange with vague spires:

Huge, peopled monoliths that touch the skies,
Whose indeterminate bases baffle sight,
Each with its Argus, incandescent eyes
Pierces the night:

Undreamt-of heights of glimmering marble loom
Like some enchanted fabric wrought of air;
Gigantic shafts of insubstantial gloom
Lift, shadowy, there:

Could fabled Camelot of the poet's dream
Surpass these towers soaring from the mist? —

These steel-ribbed granite miracles that gleam
Dim amethyst? . . .

Slow on the tide, from murky coves remote,
The freighted barges move, laboriously,
While some palatial, golden-lighted boat
Steams for the sea:

Now that the moon is breaking through the cloud
The radiant halo o'er the City pales;
Shimmer the dusky wharves with mast and shroud
And furlèd sails:

Soft strains of music, hovering, drift away;
In cloudy turrets toll the spectral bells;
While the sea-voices, from the wastes of grey,
Send faint farewells:

The homing sloops are sheltered in the slip:
The silence deepens; and up-stream afar,
A fading lantern on an anchored ship
Seems a lost star.

Lloyd Mifflin

THE SMITHS

The gas flame seemed to be fanning itself —
The kitchen was so hot.
Mrs. Smith left the steaming stove
To cool her moist cheek at the fire-escape window;
Surprised to see that the sky was still there

She wondered if there were Smiths on each soft star.
Mr. Smith shouted from the dining room:
"The soup was good, Ann; I'm ready for the meat!"

David Sentner

THE LOOP[1]

From State street bridge a snow-white glimpse of sea
Beyond the river walled in by red buildings,
O'ertopped by masts that take the sunset's gildings,
Roped to the wharf till spring shall set them free.
Great floes make known how swift the river's current.
Out of the north sky blows a cutting wind.
Smoke from the stacks and engines in a torrent
Whirls downward, by the eddying breezes thinned.
Enskyed are sign boards advertising soap,
Tobacco, coal, transcontinental trains.
A tug is whistling, straining at a rope,
Fixed to a dredge with derricks, scoops and cranes.
Down in the loop the blue-gray air enshrouds,
As with a cyclops' cape, the man-made hills
And towers of granite where the city crowds.
Above the din a copper's whistle shrills.
There is a smell of coffee and of spices.
We near the market place of trade's devices.
Blue smoke from out a roasting room is pouring.
A rooster crows, geese cackle, men are bawling.

[1] From *Songs and Satires*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Whips crack, trucks creak, it is the place of storing,
And drawing out and loading up and hauling
Fruit, vegetables and fowls and steaks and hams,
Oysters and lobsters, fish and crabs and clams.
And near at hand are restaurants and bars,
Hotels with rooms at fifty cents a day,
Beer tunnels, pool rooms, places where cigars
And cigarettes their window signs display;
Mixed in with letterings of printed tags,
Twine, boxes, cartels, sacks and leather bags,
Wigs, telescopes, eyeglasses, ladies' tresses,
Or those who manicure or fashion dresses,
Or sell us putters, tennis balls or brassies,
Make shoes, pull teeth, or fit the eye with glasses.

And now the rows of windows showing laces,
Silks, draperies and furs and costly vases,
Watches and mirrors, siiver cups and mugs,
Emeralds, diamonds, Indian, Persian rugs,
Hats, velvets, silver buckles, ostrich-plumes,
Drugs, violet water, powder and perfumes.
Here is a monstrous winking eye — beneath
A showcase by an entrance full of teeth.
Here rubber coats, umbrellas, mackintoshes,
Hoods, rubber boots and arctics and galoshes.
Here is half a block of overcoats,
In this bleak time of snow and slender throats.
Then windows of fine linen, snakewood canes,
Scarfs, opera hats, in use where fashion reigns.
As when the hive swarms, so the crowded street
Roars to the shuffling of innumerable feet.

Skyscrapers soar above them; they go by
As bees crawl, little scales upon the skin
Of a great dragon winding out and in.
Above them hangs a tangled tree of signs,
Suspended or uplifted like dædalian
Hieroglyphics when the saturnalian
Night commences, and their racing lines
Run fire of blue and yellow in a puzzle,
Bewildering to the eyes of those who guzzle,
And gourmandize and stroll and seek the bubble
Of happiness to put away their trouble.

Around the loop the elevated crawls,
And giant shadows sink against the walls
Where ten to twenty stories strive to hold
The pale refraction of the sunset's gold.
Slop underfoot, we pass beneath the loop.
The crowd is uglier, poorer; there are smells
As from the depths of unsuspected hells,
And from a groggery where beer and soup
Are sold for five cents to the thieves and bums.
Here now are huge cartoons in red and blue
Of obese women and of skeleton men,
Egyptian dancers, twined with monstrous snakes,
Before a door a turbaned lithe Hindoo,
A bagpipe shrilling, underneath a den
Of opium, whence a man with hand that shakes,
Rolling a cigarette, so palely comes.
The clang of car bells and the beat of drums.
Draft horses clamping with their steel-shod hoofs.
The buildings have grown small and black and worn,

The sky is more beholden; o'er the roofs
A flock of pigeons soars; with dresses torn
And yellow faces, labor women pass
Some Chinese gabbling; and there, buying fruit,
Stands a fair girl who is a late recruit
To those poor women slain each year by lust.
'Tis evening now and trade will soon begin.
The family entrance beckons for a glass
Of hopeful mockery, the piano's din
Into the street with sounds of rasping wires
Filters, and near a pawner's window shows
Pistols, accordions; and, luring buyers,
A Jew stands mumbling to the passer-by
Of jewelry and watches and old clothes.
A limousine gleams quickly — with a cry
A legless man fastened upon a board
With casters 'neath it by a sudden shove
Darts out of danger. And upon the corner
A lassie tells a man that God is love,
Holding a tambourine with its copper hoard
To be augmented by the drunken scorner.
A woman with no eyeballs in her sockets
Plays "Rock of Ages" on a wheezy organ.
A newsboy with cold hands thrust in his pockets
Cries, "All about the will of Pierpont Morgan!"
The roofline of the street now sinks and dwindles.
The windows are begrimed with dust and beer.
A child half clothed, with legs as thin as spindles,
Carries a basket with some bits of coal.
Between lace curtains eyes of yellow leer,
The cheeks splotched with white places like the skin

Inside an eggshell — destitute of soul.
One sees a brass lamp oozing kerosene
Upon a stand whereon her elbows lean;
Lighted, it soon will welcome negroes in.
The railroad tracks are near. We almost choke
From filth whirled from the street and stinging vapors.
Great engines vomit gas and heavy smoke
Upon a north wind driving tattered papers,
Dry dung and dust and refuse down the street.
A circumambient roar as of a wheel
Whirring far off — a monster's heart whose beat
Is full of murmurs, comes as we retreat
Towards Twenty-second. And a man with jaw
Set like a tiger's, with a dirty beard,
Skulks toward the loop, with heavy wrists red-raw
Glowing above his pockets where his hands
Pushed tensely round his hips the coat tails draw,
And show what seems a slender piece of metal
In his pocket. On these barren strands
He waits for midnight for old scores to settle
Against his ancient foe society,
Who keeps the soup house and who builds the jails.
Switchmen and firemen with their dinner pails
Go by him homeward, and he wonders if
These fellows know a hundred thousand workers
Walk up and down the city's highways, stiff
From cold and hunger, doomed to poverty,
As wretched as the thieves and crooks and shirkers.
He scurries to the lake front, loiters past
The windows of wax lights with scarlet shades,

Where smiling diners back of ambuscades
Of silk and velvet hear not winter's blast
Blowing across the lake. He has a thought
Of Michigan, where once at picking berries
He spent a summer — then his eye is caught
At Randolph street by written light which tarries,
Then like a film runs into sentences.
He sees it all as from a black abyss.
Taxis with skid chains rattle, limousines
Draw up to awnings; for a space he catches
A scent of musk or violets, sees the patches
On powdered cheeks of furred and jeweled queens.
The color round his cruel mouth grows whiter,
He thrusts his coarse hands in his pockets tighter:
He is a thief, he knows he is a thief,
He is a thief found out, and, as he knows,
The whole loop is a kingdom held in fief
By men who work with laws instead of blows
From sling shots, so he curses under breath
The money and the invisible hand that owns
From year to year, in spite of change and death,
The wires for the lights and telephones,
The railways on the streets, and overhead
The railways, and beneath the winding tunnel
Which crooks stole from the city for a runnel
To drain her nickels; and the pipes of lead
Which carry gas, wrapped round us like a snake,
And round the courts, whose grip no court can
break.
He curses bitterly all those who rise,
And rule by just the spirit which he plies

Coarsely against the world's great store of wealth;
Bankers and usurers and cliques whose stealth
Works witchcraft through the market and the press,
And hires editors, or owns the stock
Controlling papers, playing with finesse
The city's thinking, that they may unlock
Treasures and powers like burglars in the dark.
And thinking thus and cursing, through a flurry
Of sudden snow he hastens on to Clark.
In a cheap room there is an eye to mark
His coming and be glad. His footsteps hurry.
She will have money, earned this afternoon
Through men who took her from a near saloon
Wherein she sits at table to dragoon
Roughnecks or simpletons upon a lark.

Within a little hall a fierce-eyed youth
Rants of the burdens on the people's backs —
He would cure all things with the single tax.
A clergyman demands more gospel truth,
Speaking to Christians at a weekly dinner.
A parlor Marxian, for a beginner
Would take the railways. And amid applause
Where lawyers dine, a judge says all will be
Well if we hand down to posterity
Respect for courts and judges and the laws.
An anarchist would fight. Upon the whole,
Another thinks, to cultivate one's soul
Is most important — let the passing show
Go where it wills, and where it wills to go.

Outside the stars look down. Stars are content
To be so quiet and indifferent.

Edgar Lee Masters

MAY FLOWERS

May flowers on the city street —
A keen-faced vendor sells, with eyes
Fitted for coarser merchandise
Than these pathetic bits of sweet
That breathe of vague simplicities.

May flowers on the city street —
Here where the tide of traffic roars
Against its narrow crowded shores
Where men go by with hurrying feet
And barter swings its thousand doors.

May flowers on the city street —
Why, 'tis as though the young-eyed spring
Herself had come — an artless thing,
A country lass, demure and neat —
To smile upon us wondering.

May flowers on the city street —
Pink and white poetry abloom
Here in this clamor, crush and gloom —
A home-thought in the battle's heat,
A love-song in a sunless room.

May flowers on the city street —
For one poor coin behold I buy

Springtime and youth and poetry,
E'en in this sordid mart unmeet
So many miles from Arcady.

Theodosia Garrison

THE FLOWER FACTORY

Lisabetta, Marianina, Fiametta, Teresina,
They are winding stems of roses, one by one, one by one,
Little children who have never learned to play;
Teresina softly crying that her fingers ache to-day;
Tiny Fiametta nodding when the twilight slips in, gray.
High above the clattering street, ambulance and fire-gong beat,
They sit, curling crimson petals, one by one, one by one.

Lisabetta, Marianina, Fiametta, Teresina,
They have never seen a rosebush nor a dewdrop in the sun.
They will dream of the vendetta, Teresina, Fiametta,
Of a Black Hand and a face behind a grating;
They will dream of cotton petals, endless, crimson, suffocating,
Never of a wild-rose thicket nor the singing of a cricket,
But the ambulance will bellow through the wanness of their dreams,
And their tired lids will flutter with the streets' hysteric screams.

Lisabetta, Marianina, Fiametta, Teresina,
They are winding stems of roses, one by one, one by one.
Let them have a long long playtime, Lord of Toil, when toil is done,
Fill their baby hands with roses, joyous roses of the sun!

Florence Wilkinson Evans

A SONG OF CITY TRAFFIC

I HAVE heard the roar and clamor through the city's crowded ways
Of the never-ending pageant moving down the busy days —
Coaches, wagons, hearses, engines, clanging cars, and thundering drays.

I have watched them moving past me as the day began to dawn;
I have watched them creeping onward when the sun's last light was gone,
Like a serpent long and sinuous, gliding on, and on, and on.

Never, since I can remember, has this long procession ceased;
Rather has the surging torrent ever lengthened and increased,
And the human traffic changed not — prince and beggar, fool and priest.

They have marched, and still are marching, through the city's wilderness —
O the sadness of their going who shall know or who shall guess?
Prophet, lady, sage, and merchant, cap-and-bells in wisdom's dress!

Ah, poor throngs of the great city, drops within that mighty stream,
When the night descends upon you and the streets are all agleam,
Of some distant hills of silence do your worn hearts never dream?

When the brazen voice of traffic and the loud call of the mart
Strangle all the hope within you, bruise your soul and break your heart,
Do you think of some far valley where life plays another part?

Sometimes in your startled slumbers, ere the morn comes up again,
Do you dream of some blue mountain or some wonderful green glen,
Where the silver voice of silence calls the weary world of men?

O perhaps you dream, as I do, of the quiet woodland ways;

But the long procession lures you through the fleeting nights and days,
And you miss the old, old beauty for which still your spirit prays;

Miss it all, and, missing, weep not; join once more the bands of trade,
Join again the city's tumult, that long clamoring parade —
Join once more the foolish struggle which not God, but man, has made!

Losing love and losing friendship, making life but wounds and scars;
Missing beauty and calm rapture, and the shelter of the stars —
Poor, sad mortals, hearing only noise of wheels and clang of cars!

Charles Hanson Towne

LONDON BEAUTIFUL

London, I heard one say, no more is fair,
London whose loveliness is everywhere,
London so beautiful at morning light
One half forgets how fair she is at night,
London as beautiful at set of sun
As though her beauty had but just begun;
London, that mighty sob, that splendid tear,
That jewel hanging in the great world's ear.
Strange queen of all this grim romantic stone,
Paris, say some, shall push you from your throne,

And all the tumbled beauty of your dreams
Submit to map and measure, straight cold schemes
Which for the loveliness that comes by chance
Shall substitute the conscious streets of France,
A beauty made for beauty that has grown,
An alien beauty, London, for your own.

Oh wistful eyes so full of mist and tears,
Long be it ere your haunted vision clears,
Long ere the blood of your great heart shall flow
Through inexpressive avenue and row;
Straight-stepping, prim, the once adventurous
stream,
Its spirit gone, it loiters not to dream,
All straight and pretty, trees on either side,
For London's beauty London beautified.

Ah! of your beauty change no single grace,
My London with your sad mysterious face.

Richard Le Gallienne

L'ALLEGRO

(*Selection*)

Tower'd cities please us then
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace, whom all commend.

There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask, and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

John Milton

CITY OF SHIPS

City of ships!
(O the black ships! O the fierce ships!
O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steamships and sail-ships!)
City of the world! (for all races are here,
All the lands of the earth make contributions here;)
City of the sea! city of hurried and glittering tides!
City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede, whirling in and out with eddies and foam!
City of wharves and stores — city of tall façades of marble and iron!
Proud and passionate city — meddlesome, mad, extravagant city!
Spring up O city — not for peace alone, but be indeed yourself, warlike!
Fear not — submit to no models but your own O city!

Behold me — incarnate me as I have incarnated you!
I have rejected nothing you offer'd me — whom you adopted I have adopted,
Good or bad I never question you — I love all — I do not condemn anything,
I chant and celebrate all that is yours — yet peace no more,
In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of war is mine,
War, red war is my song through your streets, O city!

Walt Whitman

THE TOWN

I wonder now does God look down
Upon the town,
And what He's thinking when He sees
The people swarming there like bees;
The alleys and the dirty lanes,
The moidher of the trams and trains;
The stately carriages galore
And then the poor,
Who traipis in the bitter sleet,
With broken boots upon their feet,
I wonder what He thinks at night,
When angels set the stars alight,
And in the town the lamps are bright.
Does He watch gaming rascals cheat,
Old drunken villyains curse and fight,
While girls, grown shameless, walk the streets?

Always God hears the cherubim
Sing praise to Him.
But where He's sitting on his throne
Can He hear starving women moan?
Above the harping of each saint
Are little childher's voices faint?
Can He in all the music hear
Them sob for fear?
On dirty pavements babies sprawl,
With them to mind them scarce less small.
It's sure God hears the cries of these,
And all the oaths and blasphemies
Of thim that's never on their knees.
He hears the drunkards shout and bawl
Above the angels' melodies —
I wonder what God thinks at all?

W. M. Letts

FRONT DOORS

From Notting Hill to Hyde Park Square
The streets have an inhuman air,
The houses — (six imposing floors;
Dark, formidable, fierce front doors;
Tall windows, sightless, sealed and blind:
Ball-room or billiard-room behind) —
Must shelter, they're so vast and cold,
None but the ugly and the old. . . .

Watch, as you wander hereabout,
The people who go in and out!

Sleek-bellied men in varnished hats,
Fur coats, check trousers, gleaming spats,
Flock in procession, pompous, grand,
Or drive in motors to the Strand;
And massive women, towering high,
Dart glances from a hawklike eye,
Pause, sniffing the post-luncheon breeze,
Then drive (to train for several teas),
Snub the companion, pat the dog,
Sneeze, cough and grumble at the fog.

Jerusalem no more golden is
Than gloomy Bayswater, I wis!
Her portals strike an awe profound —
"Fly, loiterers, this is holy ground!
Quell impropriety of tone;
Hawkers and circulars begone" —
For here the ruling race reside
And guard our pledges and their pride.
Her doors are sour: they never smile,
But icily stare for mile on mile —
Vast, supercilious, gleaming, hard:
Fastened securely, bolted, barred!

Douglas Goldring

OUTER SUBURBIA

Where London sprawls across the gentle fields,
In those far fringes where the green begins —
Eltham and Enfield, Southall and Wanstead Flat —
The landscape but a loveless prospect yields:

Wan grass, the last week's washing, a dead cat,
Factories, maisonettes, and sardine-tins.

Yet even here the honeysuckle blows,
And the shy nightingale enchants the gloom;
And sometimes I have seen the wayside rose
Kissing the hawthorn bough by Barking Fair.
And when the evening flowers with lights of home,
Each window seems a little silent prayer.

Thomas Burke

CHARWOMEN

There is a building on a city square
That soars in marble to a golden dome;
A temple reared to Pleasure, and her home.
Thither, at night, her votaries repair
To worship her in wine and dainty fare.
Laughter and lights and music dance and foam
Upon the liquid hours till day be come,
Driving them like thin vapors into air.

Then do these others, creeping on all fours,
Do Pleasure's drudge-work when herself hath fled.
To them her palace nothing is but floors
And staircases, all soilure with her tread.
They crawl through empty rooms and corridors,
Gathering broken meats and crusts of bread.

James Norman Hall

THE SUBWAY

I

Crowds pour down from the street and out of the locals,
A turbulent, tossing, rushing, surging stream,
Choked and dammed on the narrow, congested platform
Into a seething, eddying, heaving pool;
Crowds pour down from the street and out of the locals,
And up the stairs and down and from the express,
Wriggling, squeezing, squirming, panting and breathless,
They push and pull and jostle and jam and swarm:
The scuffle of feet, the solid impact of bodies,
The sharp staccato of swiftly slamming doors:
Over and over again the raucous order
Harsh from the throat of the melting, grimy guard —
"Watch-step — watch-step — watch-step — watch-step-step-lively!" —
Like a neighbor's cracked, unceasing gramophone.
He wedges and fits and packs with swift precision,
Shoves and shoulders and crams and crushes them in,
And slides the door on the heaving, struggling bodies,
Cutting away the hapless, overflowing,
As a pastry cook trims off the edge of a pie.
Crowds pour down from the street and out of the locals,

They push and pull and jostle and jam and swarm,
Tired people with fretful pallid faces,
Fighting their way in silence, tense and grim,
Obsessed, intent, unheeding, dogged and joyless, —
A fierce and virulent form of the verb To Go! —
Pushing, fighting, jamming —

On the coast of Maine
Little hollow houses
Are graying in the rain
Ghostly in the moonlight,
Bleaching in the sun;
Pitiful with emptiness,
For their day is done.

II

The platform, now remembered, seems a haven, —
Compared with the coach, a cool, and spacious place.
The breathless, throbbing heat is horrifying;
The heat . . . the heat . . . the wilting, relentless heat.
They sit or stand, relaxed and limp, enduring
The torrid hyphen that bridges work and home:
Some irate and some in a pallid patience,
Pale people and people shining and red.
There is a small dark girl in a mussy middy, —
A middy blouse that makes you think of the sea —
The tumbling sea with crisping crests of foam —
Salt, stinging spray and bravely shining brass
And gay, striped awnings — suppers on the deck —
But she had worn it to work for many days,
And she looks as if she never had seen the sea.

There are dull-eyed girls whose gallant rouge and powder
Are cut by crooked water-ways of sweat.
The stifling, choking heat is horrifying;
The heat . . . the heat . . . the merciless, melting heat.
A standing woman is gasping and going to faint;
She lets the handle go and sags inertly,
But she isn't going to fall; there isn't room,
For she is glued between a tipsy sailor
And a sallow, shaking wraith with a bandaged head.
The air is stale and dead and hotter . . . hotter . . .
Breathing is baffled by fluffy puffs of heat
From the crushed and steaming mass of human cattle,
Wedged in, body to body and breath to breath.
Stifling, gasping, reeking —

Westward, cool and dry,
Miles and miles of prairie
Roll up against the sky;
Sun-cured and radiant,
Redolent and keen,
Wide and free beyond the gaze
Wind-swept and clean.

III

Rattle and crash and roar of the rapid transit,
Mad modern music, built on the theme of speed;
Single noises and noises welded together,
With one out-standing in discord, over all,
Until in the jaded brain it hums and pierces

Like the sly, burrowing buzz of the dentist's drill.
There are glaring lights which make the noise seem
louder, —
The lurid glow of a fierce electric noon:
There are signs which draw the tired eyes up like
magnets,
Strident signs which are noises visualized;
You cannot evade or dodge them, — loud, insistent,
Insolent signs, determined to be read.
They scream of somebody's soup and soap and
garters,
Somebody's pajamas and tea and cigarettes,
And somebody's gloves and gum and flour and tonic,
Somebody's whisky and collars and breakfast food.
The eyes that read must run from color to color,
Stabbed and prodded with yellow and rasping red
Until with the jolt and jar of the frantic going
Is mingled the crash of unrelated tones.
There are reds and blues and yellows that are noises
And noises that are yellow and blue and red;
The senses of sight and sound are nagged and
goaded,
Noise in the eyes as harsh as noise in the ears;
The rushing roar of the crazy speed enhances
The garishness of the bright and glaring gloom.

Jolting, rasping, screeching —

Over hill and plain
There is sanctuary,
Inviolate and still;
There is hush and healing;

Dimly green, afar,
Stand the forest places,
Silent as a star.

Ruth Comfort Mitchell

THE HARBINGER

The raucous voice of a hawker
Hurt every listening ear.
A hurdy-gurdy was playing
Tunes of another year.
The sun shone dusty and shyly,
Drab was the street and drear.

It is Springtime! Spring in the city!
Shouted a voice of glee,
But never a glimpse of the springtime
Greeted the eyes of me
In the crowded slums of the city
Hard by the weary sea.

I thought, O Fatuous! Foolish!
Crying of Spring and Youth,
'Mid the towering tenements standing
Grimy, unkempt, uncouth;
And I envied the heart of the dreamer
Blind to the hurt of Truth.

And then there fluttered about us,
Come from I know not where,
A glimpse, and away — a robin —
Brazen and debonair . . .

The sordid street of the city
Smiled, and with Spring was fair.
Edmund Leamy

NEWPORT STREET, E.

Down Newport Street, last Sunday night,
Bill stabbed his sweetheart in the breast:
She screamed and fell, a dreadful sight,
And Bill strode on like one possest.

O Love's a curse to them that's young
'Twas all because of love and drink;
Why couldn't the silly hold her tongue,
Or stop, before she spoke, to think?

She played with fire, did pretty Nell,
So Bill must hang ere summer's here:
Christ, what a crowd are sent to Hell
Through love, and poverty and beer!
Douglas Goldring

THE LODGING-HOUSE

They fling their boots down and they coarsely talk.
Inquire not what they say.
And then they lose themselves until the day.

They have strange sorry faces as they sleep,
Scarred with the wounds of sense,
And not one face of clear-cut eloquence.

There's yon a lad, with the spoiled wavy mouth
  Of beauty sold to ease;
And one who lies gigantic and misshapen
Like an ironic Hercules.

The old men are unbeautiful and sodden,
  With Something eaten away
From the inner secret plasm, how we return to clay!

Florence Wilkinson Evans

THE TENEMENT BACK-YARDS

Close by the elevated the worst of the back-yards lie,
Barren, desolate spaces under an ashen sky,
Bottles and boxes and papers and pieces of glass and tin,
And rotted boards of fencing that shut the scrap-heap in.

Hopeless, dreary ash-piles — and yet there is laughter here;
And hearts bowed down with labor still trace the round of the year,
When the rays of first spring sunshine strike through the dingy pane,
And the broken, rag-stuffed windows are stripped of their rags again.

For over the dust and ashes roll surges of conquering life,
Life and glory of living, the joy and the pain and the strife,

Love and the faith of loving, and wan hope's fitful
gleams;
Ay, even the lost are haunted by the pallid beauty
of dreams.

Anna Louise Strong

IN A HALL BEDROOM

"In the long border on the right
I shall plant larkspur first," she thinks.
"Peonies and chrysanthemums
And then sweet-scented maiden pinks.

"The border on the left shall hold
Nothing but masses of white phlox.
Forget-me-nots shall edge this one,
The one across be edged with box.

"The sun-dial in the centre stands.
The morning-glories bright shall twine.
And in the strip at either end
Shall grow great clumps of columbine.

"There is no garden in the world
So beautiful as mine," she dreams.
Rising, she walks the little space
To where her narrow window gleams.

She gazes through the dingy pane
To where the street is noisy still,
And tends with pitiable care
A tulip on the window-sill.

Aline Kilmer

THE BUILDING

WHENCE these hods, and bricks of bright red clay,
And swart men climbing ladders in the night?

Stilled are the clamorous energies of day,
The streets are dumb, and, prodigal of light,
The lamps but shine upon a city of sleep.
A step goes out into the silence; far
Across the quiet roofs the hour is tolled
From ghostly towers; the indifferent earth may keep
That ragged flotsam shielded from the cold
In earth's good time: not, moving among men,
Shall he compel so fortunate a star.
Pavements I know, forsaken now, are strange,
Alien walks not beautiful, that then,
In the familiar day, are part of all
My breathless pilgrimage, not beautiful, but dear;
The monotony of sound has suffered change,
The eddies of wanton sound are spent, and clear
To bleak monotonies of silence fall.

And, while the city sleeps, in the central poise
Of quiet, lamps are flaming in the night,
Blown to long tongues by winds that moan between
The growing walls, and throwing misty light
On swart men bearing bricks of bright red clay
In laden hods; and ever the thin noise
Of trowels deftly fashioning the clean
Long lines that are the shaping of proud thought.
Ghost-like they move between the day and day,

These men whose labor strictly shall be wrought
Into the captive image of a dream.
Their sinews weary not, the plummet falls
To measured use from steadfast hands apace,
And momently the moist and levelled seam
Knits brick to brick and momently the walls
Bestow the wonder of form on formless space.

And whence all these? The hod and plummet-line,
The trowels tapping, and the lamps that shine
In long, dust-heavy beams from wall to wall,
The mortar and the bricks of bright red clay,
Ladder and corded scaffolding, and all
The gear of common traffic — whence are they?
And whence the men who use them?
When he came,
God upon chaos, crying in the name
Of all adventurous vision that the void
Should yield up man, and man, created, rose
Out of the deep, the marvel of all things made,
Then in immortal wonder was destroyed
All worth of trivial knowledge, and the close
Of man's most urgent meditation stayed
Even as his first thought — "Whence am I sprung?"
What proud ecstatic mystery was pent
In that first act for man's astonishment,
From age to unconfessing age, among
His manifold travel. And in all I see
Of common daily usage is renewed
This primal and ecstatic mystery
Of chaos bidden into many-hued

Wonders of form, life in the void create,
And monstrous silence made articulate.

Not the first word of God upon the deep
Nor the first of life along the day
More marvellous than these new walls that sweep
Starward, these lines that discipline the clay,
These lamps swung in the wind that send their light
On swart men climbing ladders in the night.
No trowel-tap but sings anew for men
The rapture of quickening water and continent,
No mortared line but witnesses again
Chaos transfigured into lineament.

John Drinkwater

IN A FURNISHED ROOM HOUSE

Full moons in the mist of the bough-hung park,
And a wan glimmer on the ceiling of my room . . .

I lie, staring upward . . .
Above the ceiling a woman is moving timidly to and fro . . .
And above the woman, the mist-filled sky,
And above the sky, the stars beyond our troublings . . .

The stars are not farther from me
Than you, so timidly stirring.

James Oppenheim

NEW YORK

From my window
I look down upon the city —
Sleeping in the early morning sun;
Its many roofs and buildings
Have the wealth and color
Of an Oriental rug —
A rug for prayer —
There, even as the city sleeps,
I seem to see its prostrate soul
Mumbling a prayer to Mammon.

Marie Tudor Garland

THE ELECTRICIAN

Where the sparks of the white-hot welder play,
Where the searchlights stab at the fogbanks grey,
Where the bright lights glare on the Great White Way,
The Slave of the Lamp is lurking,
The Slave of the Lamp, yet the Master too,
The wizard of light in a world made new
Where the fairy tales of the past come true
And the dreams of the past are working!

The power house is his charge to keep,
Where the dynamos whir and the blue sparks leap,
And death is waiting — if caution sleep —
In the midst of the day's endeavour,
For if ever that harnessed might breaks loose
From the chains that hold it bound for use,

The Slave of the Lamp — and Boss of the Juice —
Is done with the Job, forever!

He tinkers away at the trolley wire
Or jauntily dares the third rail's ire,
That things may run to his heart's desire
And the work of the world hold steady.
Would you hire a man who is schooled to jolts,
Who can play ping pong with the thunderbolts
And juggle away with a million volts?
The Slave of the Lamp is ready!

Berton Braley

A SWEETHEART: THOMPSON STREET

Queen of all streets, Fifth Avenue
Stretches her slender limbs
From the great Arch of Triumph, on —
On, where the distance dims

The splendors of her jewelled robes,
Her granite draperies;
The magic, sunset-smitten walls
That veil her marble knees;

For ninety squares she lies a queen,
Superb, bare, unashamed,
Yielding her beauty scornfully
To worshippers unnamed.

But at her feet her sister glows,
A daughter of the South:

Squalid, immeasurably mean, —
But oh! her hot, sweet mouth!

My Thompson Street! a Tuscan girl,
Hot with life's wildest blood;
Her black shawl on her black, black hair,
Her brown feet stained with mud;

A scarlet blossom at her lips,
A new babe at her breast;
A singer at a wine-shop door,
(Her lover unconfessed).

Listen! a hurdy-gurdy plays —
Now alien melodies:
She smiles, she cannot quite forget
The mother over-seas.

But she no less is mine alone,
Mine, mine! . . . Who may I be?
Have *I* betrayed her from her home?
I am called Liberty!

Samuel McCoy

UNDER THE BELL

YESTERDAY my body was in the place that glorifies man,
Yesterday my body was in the city . . .
In tumult I walked: and I was as a ball thrown about —

Flesh of me chasing through crowded streets, shot
like a bolt by a subway train.
Drenched in electric lights of night: deafened with
gaudy music and clamorous tongues —
But all was Man, Man, Man . . .

To-day my body is in the place that belittles Man:
My ears are muffled in the silence of the hills:
It is as if my eyes had mowed down skyscrapers and
cleaned away the distance:
And at night like a fly under a glass bell,
I crawl, star-stunned.

James Oppenheim

FIFTH AVENUE SKY-SCRAPERS

We are the phantoms of mortar and brick
Slapped against patches of sky,
Stretching our taut, slender bodies
Into the clouds.

Under us endless masses of people, endlessly walking
Somewhere, nowhere;
Endlessly swallowed by us
Who house them, feed them, clothe them,
Followed by masses of others, endlessly walking.

We do not walk.
We have mounted the pace of men's minds that
have made us —
Made us the thing that we are,
The sphinx of a world that is new, yet blind as the old.

They do not see us — the sphinx,
The soul of themselves.

For they are aimlessly walking —
Anywhere, nowhere —
Walking to deaden the hour,
Walking toward life,
Walking toward death,
Somewhere . . .

Alice D. Lippman

SIGNS

The city has a million lights;
They blaze on shops and shows and bars,
Through all the blaring, crowded nights
They dim the glory of the stars.

But in the day, one only sees
Dull frames and hoardings where these stood,
Unlit by flashing witcheries —
Poor things of lettering and wood.

And high above the domes and towers,
Glowing and glorious and bright,
God swings his sign for working hours, —
His undimmed, golden sphere of light.

Before the door of heaven, the sun;
Before the marts of men, the mean
And burned-out lights of Babylon, —
And we — bewildered moths — between.

Theodosia Garrison

SALLY IN OUR ALLEY

Of all the girls that are so smart
There's none like pretty Sally;
She is the darling of my heart,
And she lives in our alley.
There is no lady in the land
Is half so sweet as Sally;
She is the darling of my heart,
And she lives in our alley.

Her father he makes cabbage-nets
And through the streets does cry them;
Her mother she sells laces long
To such as please to buy them:
But sure such folks could ne'er beget
So sweet a girl as Sally!
She is the darling of my heart,
And she lives in our alley.

When she is by, I leave my work,
I love her so sincerely;
My master comes like any Turk,
And bangs me most severely —
But let him bang his bellyful,
I'll bear it all for Sally;
She is the darling of my heart,
And she lives in our alley.

Of all the days that's in the week
I dearly love but one day —

And that's the day that comes betwixt
A Saturday and Monday;
For then I'm dressed all in my best
To walk abroad with Sally;
She is the darling of my heart,
And she lives in our alley.

My master carries me to church,
And often am I blamed
Because I leave him in the lurch
As soon as text is named;
I leave the church in sermon-time
And slink away to Sally;
She is the darling of my heart,
And she lives in our alley.

When Christmas comes about again
O then I shall have money;
I'll hoard it up, and box and all
I'll give it to my honey:
And would it were ten thousand pounds,
I'd give it all to Sally;
She is the darling of my heart,
And she lives in our alley.

My master and the neighbors all
Make game of me and Sally,
And, but for her, I'd better be
A slave and row a galley;
But when my seven long years are out
O then I'll marry Sally, —

O then we'll wed, and then we'll bed,
But not in our alley!

Henry Carey

CHERRY GARDENS

My man fell in, when he was drunk;
They'd thrown him out o' the "King's Head."
From Wapping stairs he fell, and sunk.
He was my man; he's dead.

On the cold slab, a sight to see,
They've laid him out — poor handsome chap —
In Rotherhithe's new mortuary.
His head should dent my lap.

But I mayn't warm him where he lies,
Because I have no ring to show —
Yet I've his bruises on my eyes;
And bore his child a month ago.

Douglas Goldring

CITY COMRADESHIP

Face on face in the city, and when will the faces end?
Face on face in the city, but never the face of a friend;
Till my heart grows sick with longing and dazed with the din of the street,
As I rush with the thronging thousands, in a loneliness complete.

Shall I not know my brothers? Their toil is one with mine.
We offer the fruits of our labor on the same great city's shrine.
They are weary as I am weary; they are happy and sad with me;
And all of us laugh together when evening sets us free.

Face on face in the city, and where shall our fortunes fall?
Face on face in the city, — my heart goes out to you all.
See, we labor together; is not the bond divine?
Lo, the strength of the city is built of your life and mine.

Anna Louise Strong

FOURTH AVENUE IN APRIL

Down in the street there's a hurdy-gurdy calling,
And Italy is singing in its cadences athrill —
The orange-carts are blooming like a garden of Sorrento
In a maze of tangled traffic that is climbing Murray Hill.

In the shadows of a doorway with her basket full of pencils
Winter sits unnoticed, with her wares upon her knees;

And the errand-girl astrolling by the flower-laden windows
Never sees the lonely phantom humming, crooning in the breeze.

The Spring is in Fourth Avenue — it's gilding all the towers
To gold and crocus-purple with the radiance of the morn;
And jostling men are smiling, *and one was heard to whistle!*

. . . . . .

The woman selling pencils sits unnoticed, and forlorn.

Archie Austin Coates

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS

One more unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so tenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements;
Whilst the wave constantly

Drips from her clothing;
Take her up instantly,
Loving, not loathing —

Touch her not scornfully;
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful:
Past all dishonor,
Death has left on her
Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
One of Eve's family —
Wipe those poor lips of hers
Oozing so clammily.

Loop up her tresses
Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses;
Whilst wonderment guesses
Where was her home?

Who was her father?
Who was her mother?

Had she a sister?
Had she a brother?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
Yet, than all other?

Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!
O, it was pitiful!
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
Feelings had changed:
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood, with amazement,
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver;

But not the dark arch,
Or the black flowing river:
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled —
Anywhere, anywhere
Out of the world.

In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly
The rough river ran, —
Over the brink of it,
Picture it — think of it,
Dissolute man!
Lave in it, drink of it,
Then, if you can!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
Decently, — kindly, —
Smooth, and compose them;
And her eyes, close them,
Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring
Through muddy impurity,

As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fixed on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurred by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
Into her rest. —
Cross her hands humbly,
As if praying dumbly,
Over her breast!
Owning her weakness,
Her evil behavior,
And leaving, with meekness,
Her sins to her Saviour!

Thomas Hood

IN A RESTAURANT [1]

He wears a red rose in his buttonhole,
A city-clerk on Sunday dining out:
And as the music surges over the din
The heady quavering of the violin
Sings through his blood, and puts old cares to rout,
And tingles, quickening, through his shrunken soul,

Till he forgets his ledgers, and the prim
Black, crabbed figures, and the qualmy smell

[1] From *Borderlands and Thoroughfares*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Of ink and musty leather and lead glaze,
As, in eternities of Sunday days,
He dives through shivering waves, or rides the swell
On rose-red seas of melody aswim.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

OVER THE CITY'S RAGGED EDGE

Where the poorer people live
On the city's ragged edge,
Muddy street strays into meadow,
Hateful wall gives way to hedge;
Toward the poorer part of town
The unshorn hearty hill slopes down,
Strewing paths of dandelions
Just to lure you to its crown.

And the birds with all their songs
Are like neighbors over there,
And a field of dancing daisies
More than any park is fair;
And beyond the streetways' bound
Rise the rough old hills around,
And through many a pit and pathway
You can see the good red ground.

Shaemas O. Sheel

SLUMS

In the dusty glare of a humid morning,
The slow horse-trucks get in each other's way,
The drivers lash and curse,

The rough-paved streets are sticky with flies,
The hucksters shout, the fat dirty women scream in
their crabbed bargainings:
Filth shoves against filth, and crying children are
yanked by the arm and told to "Shut up!"

One sees too the swindle of housing:
Vast populations are broom-swept into this indus-
trial devastation:
Lying tissues of plaster, brick and wood . . .
And this acreage swarms with neglect . . .

The factories vomit their poisonous smokes in the
very faces of the people:
Dirt lies where it fell: the forlorn smoke-blackened
trees shrivel and wither:
And at dawn, in the refuse heaps, one sees mangy
dogs like jackals nosing for morsels . . .

Yes, humanity in the gross is ugly, dirty and abhor-
rent:
War almost seems as a necessary cleansing of this
abscess:
As if Earth had a carbuncle on her smooth and
beautiful flesh.

Among all the animals, man is the dirtiest and
cheapest and ugliest:
Even a coyote has bright burning eyes, lithe health
and a clean fur:
Even a hog is enamoured of sunshine and has a rock-
strong natural huskiness:

What have we done with ourselves, we of the race of
Ulysses, David and Roland,
That thus in the mass, we appear such rubbish and
refuse?

James Oppenheim

DELICATESSEN

Why is that wanton gossip Fame
So dumb about this man's affairs?
Why do we titter at his name
Who come to buy his curious wares?

Here is a shop of wonderment.
From every land has come a prize;
Rich spices from the Orient,
And fruit that knew Italian skies,

And figs that ripened by the sea
In Smyrna, nuts from hot Brazil,
Strange pungent meats from Germany,
And currants from a Grecian hill.

He is the lord of goodly things
That make the poor man's table gay,
Yet of his worth no minstrel sings
And on his tomb there is no bay.

Perhaps he lives and dies unpraised,
This trafficker in humble sweets,
Because his little shops are raised
By thousands in the city streets.

Yet stars in greater numbers shine,
And violets in millions grow,
And they in many a golden line
Are sung, as every child must know.

Perhaps Fame thinks his worried eyes,
His wrinkled, shrewd, pathetic face,
His shop, and all he sells and buys
Are desperately commonplace.

Well, it is true he has no sword
To dangle at his booted knees.
He leans across a slab of board,
And draws his knife and slices cheese.

He never heard of chivalry,
He longs for no heroic times;
He thinks of pickles, olives, tea,
And dollars, nickels, cents and dimes.

His world has narrow walls, it seems;
By counters is his soul confined;
His wares are all his hopes and dreams,
They are the fabric of his mind.

Yet — in a room above the store
There is a woman — and a child
Pattered just now across the floor;
The shopman looked at him and smiled.

For, once he thrilled with high romance
And turned to love his eager voice.

Like any cavalier of France
He wooed the maiden of his choice.

And now deep in his weary heart
Are sacred flames that whitely burn.
He has of Heaven's grace a part
Who loves, who is beloved in turn.

And when the long day's work is done,
(How slow the leaden minutes ran!)
Home, with wife and little son,
He is no huckster, but a man!

And there are those who grasp his hand,
Who drink with him and wish him well.
O in no drear and lonely land
Shall he who honors friendship dwell.

And in his little shop, who knows
What bitter games of war are played?
Why, daily on each corner grows
A foe to rob him of his trade.

He fights, and for his fireside's sake;
He fights for clothing and for bread:
The lances of his foeman make
A steely halo round his head.

He decks his window artfully,
He haggles over paltry sums.
In this strange field his war must be
And by such blows his triumph comes.

What if no trumpet sounds to call
  His arméd legions to his side?
What if to no ancestral hall
  He comes in all a victor's pride?

The scene shall never fit the deed.
  Grotesquely wonders come to pass.
The fool shall mount an Arab steed
  And Jesus ride upon an ass.

This man has home and child and wife
  And battle set for every day.
This man has God and love and life;
  These stand, all else shall pass away.

O Carpenter of Nazareth,
  Whose mother was a village maid,
Shall we, Thy children, blow our breath
  In scorn on any humble trade?

Have pity on our foolishness
  And give us eyes, that we may see
Beneath the shopman's clumsy dress
  The splendor of humanity!

Joyce Kilmer

ON THE PASSING OF THE LAST FIRE HORSE FROM MANHATTAN ISLAND

I REMEMBER the cleared streets, the strange
  suspense
As if a thunder-storm were under way;

Magnificently furious, hurrying thence,
The fire-eyed horses racing to the fray;
Out of old Homer where the heroes are,
Beating upon the whirlwind thunderous hoofs,
Wild horses and plumed Ajax in his car:
Oh, in those days we still possest the proofs
Men battled shouting by the gates of Troy,
With shields of triple brass and spears of flame.
With what distended nostrils, what fierce joy,
What ring on stone and steel, those horses came.
Like horses of gods that whirl to the dawn's burning,
They came, and they are gone, and unreturning.

Kenneth Slade Alling

FROM AN ELEVATED TRAIN

A GLOOMY street in sunlight, nor does dark
Disguise its dreariness; the windows stark
Of wholesale houses, cavernous and bare,
Show dust-smeared panes before the pallid glare
Of cold lights high within. An endless row
Of street-lamps, rising tall, wan brightness throw
And heavy shadows, sharply angled, cast
On faces that go by in throngs as fast
As scattered bits of paper whirled away
In swollen gutters on a rainy day.

Jean M. Batchelor

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

(*Selection*)

IF to the city sped — What waits him there?
To see profusion that he must not share;

To see ten thousand baneful arts combin'd
To pamper luxury, and thin mankind;
To see those joys the sons of pleasure know
Extorted from his fellow creature's woe.
Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade;
Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome where Pleasure holds her midnight reign
Here, sickly deck'd, admits the gorgeous train;
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy!
Sure these denote one universal joy!
Are these thy serious thoughts? — Ah, turn thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shiv'ring female lies.
She once, perhaps, in village plenty bless'd,
Has wept at tales of innocence distress'd;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn;
Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,
And, pinch'd with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

Oliver Goldsmith

PICCADILLY

Quéen of all streets, you stand alway
Lovely by dusk or dark or day.
Cruellest of streets that I do know,
I love you wheresoe'er I go.

The daytime knows your lyric wonder:
Your tunes that rhyme and chime and thunder,
And exiles vision with delight
Your million-blossomed charm of night.

Sweet frivolous frock and fragrant face
Your shadow-fretted pavements trace;
And all about your haunted mile
Hangs a soft air, a girlish smile.

But other steps make echo here,
With curse and prayer and wasted tear;
And under the silver wings of sleep
Your desolate step-children creep.

Street of all fair streets fairest — say
Why thus we love you night and day;
And why we love you last and best
Whose hearts were broken on your breast!

Thomas Burke

SUNSET IN THE CITY

Above the town a monstrous wheel is turning,
With glowing spokes of red,

Low in the west its fiery axle burning;
And, lost amid the spaces overhead,
A vague white moth, the moon, is fluttering.

Above the town an azure sea is flowing,
'Mid long peninsulas of shining sand,
From opal into pearl the moon is growing,
Dropped like a shell upon the changing strand.

Within the town the streets grow strange and haunted,
And, dark against the western lakes of green,
The buildings change to temples, and unwonted
Shadows and sounds creep in where day has been.

Within the town, the lamps of sin are flaring,
Poor foolish men that know not what ye are!
Tired traffic still upon his feet is faring —
Two lovers meet and kiss and watch a star.

Richard Le Gallienne

THE MILLINER'S APPRENTICE

A MILLINER'S Lithuanian errand-girl
Limped up the Avenue;
The florist's window spread its fairy garden
Before her view,
Orchids alive, leaves fringed like scarlet feathers,
And bushes burning blue.

She stood before the window a long while,
The shop's dull ravelings on her somber cloak,

Like a dazed heavy beetle half-benumbed
In a gay troop of gauzy-winged folk.
The elfin vivid flowers, like kin to her,
Some rich prenatal memory awoke.

Two beautiful great ladies, wreathed in wealth,
Slipped shimmering softly through the florist's door;
Their bright impersonal gaze glanced over her
As if she were a pattern on the floor.
Squat, open-mouthed, bewitched, I saw her stand,
Her timid soul adrift on what strange shore!

Florence Wilkinson Evans

THE CHILDREN IN THE CORRIDORS

I HAVE seen children playing in the corridors of great hotels —
Pathetic, lonely little creatures,
Surrounded by rich velvet curtains and disinterested nurses,
Trying to play hide-and-seek quietly in the hushed hallways,
Behind shining pillars, as country children play behind trees;
Or teasing the bell-boys, for lack of other companionship,
As the bell-boys hurry about their duties.

These are the children that seldom see their parents;
They are, sadly enough, the product of accident,
And their parents are indifferent to them.

They are tragic little beings;
I am sorry for them with as much pity
As one can retain who lives forever in a crowded
metropolis.
In the afternoons I have seen their nurses take them
Out of the corridors of the big hotels
Into the noisy stone corridors of the streets,
And parade them solemnly up and down, up and
down,
As if they were wooden images instead of human
beings.
And always the wise little children's eyes follow
other little children
Who are in a like predicament,
As if to say, if they could, "We are all one Masonic
breed,
And we understand one another."

They are led to the broader corridor of the Avenue,
And toward the Park, with its pitiful spaces of
green,
Its gravel walks, and its inhospitable signs
That warn them from the grass. They are always
surrounded by walls;
There is never any real freedom, even in the Park,
And the grey, great buildings, the immaculate
hotels,
Are visible in the near distance, and seem to say,
"You cannot escape us! Our windows are eyes that
watch you,
And we shall call you back soon."

These children have never learned to play;
They have never learned the wonder of real companionship
With some one who loves them. I pity them more than I pity
The children of poorer people, for the children of poorer people are loved,
And these are cast out because they are in the way,
And given into the keeping of paid servants
Who slight them or secretly frighten them.
They live forever in a state of semi-neglect,
And they will grow up — God pity them! —
Selfish, inconsequential men and women;
For their characters are formed in corridors,
And corridors are narrow, dim places.

Charles Hanson Towne

AT TWILIGHT [1]

You are a painter — listen —
I'll paint you a picture too!
Of the long white lights that glisten
Through Michigan Avenue;
With the red lights down the middle
Where the street shines mirror-wet,
While the rain-strung sky is a fiddle
For the wind to feel and fret.
Look! far in the east great spaces
Meet out on the level lake,

[1] From *You and I*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Where the lit ships veil their faces
And glide like ghosts at a wake;
And up in the air, high over
The rain-shot shimmer of light,
The huge sky-scrapers hover
And shake out their stars at the night.
Oh, the city trails gold tassels
From the skirts of her purple gown,
And lifts up her commerce castles
Like a jewel-studded crown.
See, proudly she moves on, singing
Up the storm-dimmed track of time —
Road dark and dire,
Where each little light
Is a soul afire
Against the night!
Oh, grandly she marches, flinging
Her gifts at our feet, and singing! —
Have I chalked out a sketch in my rhyme?

Harriet Monroe

SUMMER EVENING: NEW YORK SUBWAY–STATION

Perspiring violence derides
The pathetic collapse of dirt.
An effervescence of noises
Depends upon cement for its madness.
Electric light is taut and dull,
Like a nauseated suspense.
This kind of heat is the recollection

Of an orgy in a swamp.
Soiled caskets joined together
Slide to rasping stand-stills.
People savagely tamper
With each other's bodies,
Scampering in and out of doorways.
Weighted with apathetic bales of people
The soiled caskets rattle on.
The scene consists of mosaics
Jerkily pieced together and blown apart.
A symbol of billowing torment,
This sturdy girl leans against an iron girder.
Weariness has loosened her face
With its shining cruelty.
Round and poverty-stricken
Her face renounces life.
Her white cotton waist is a wet skin on her
breast:
Her black hat, crisp and delicate,
Does not understand her head.
An old man stoops beside her,
Sweat and wrinkles erupting
Upon the blunt remnants of his face.
A little black pot of a hat
Corrupts his grey-haired head.

Two figures on a subway-platform,
Pieced together by an old complaint.

Maxwell Bodenheim

PAWNBROKER [1]

Pawnbroker, pawnbroker, what will you lend me
On my grandmother's locket with the old gold chain?
(I wore it one night when my dear leaned to kiss me —
We were walking home in the cool grey rain.)

Pawnbroker, what will you lend me on my coat?
It's fine cloth. (The weather is warmer to-day.
It was cold when he gave me that coat on my birthday,
Reckless because they had raised his pay.)

Sign of the three golden balls, I am going;
For now I have nothing. As others have died,
Even so I can. I'll not be returning;
For pawnbroker, what would you lend on my pride?

Marguerite Wilkinson

IN A CITY PARK

A stretch of lawn as smooth as happiness,
And tender green withal, and dappled o'er
With shadows that the birches throw, unless
A maple here and there throws shadows more.
Beyond, the houses, spires, toilings, din,
And all that makes a cityful of sin.

[1] From *Bluestone*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

And yet the sin's ashine, and, somehow, from
This common scene, that's trying to be fair,
There's something rises in the city's hum,
There's something brooding o'er the smoke and blare,
That makes the place and time and people seem
A beauty, and a promise, and a dream.

Richard Burton

FIFTH AVENUE BUS [1]

Let us get on the back of this green beetle
And see the world
On our way to the office.
The beetle sways
As if it were trying to brush us off.
It blunders along the streets
Like a blind thing
Finding its way
By some miracle.
It stops
And starts again.
It creeps on down the street
Thinking its own thought
While we sit on its back
And see the world.
We can look down at the faces on the sidewalks
And at the black shiny tops of hansoms:
We can see into second stories

[1] From *Youth Riding*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Of all the buildings.
We know their secrets.
White faces turn unseeingly up to us;
The roofs look indifferently down;
And the green beetle
Like a beast in a fairy tale,
Bears us on its back
That we may see the world.

Mary Carolyn Davies

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

(*As distinguished by an Italian person of quality*)

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,

Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
— I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's
turned wool.

But the city, oh the city — the square with the
houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's some-
thing to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters,
who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when
the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted
properly.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March
by rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered
well off the heights;
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the
oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray
olive-trees.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all
at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April
suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen
three fingers well,

The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foambows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch — fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed
church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence
rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never
a pin.
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills,
lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market
beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new
play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal
thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of
rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some
little new law of the Duke's!

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend
Don So-and-so,
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome,
and Cicero,
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming), "the
skirts of Saint Paul has reached,
Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more
unctuous than ever he preached."
Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession! our
Lady borne smiling and smart,
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven
swords stuck in her heart!

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleasure in life.

But bless you, it's dear — it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing the gate
It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still — ah, the pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals:
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

Robert Browning

NEW YORK

The low line of the walls that lie outspread
Miles on long miles, the fog and smoke and slime,
The wharves and ships with flags of every clime,

The domes and steeples rising overhead!
It is not these. Rather it is the tread
Of the million heavy feet that keep sad time
To heavy thoughts, the want that mothers crime,
The weary toiling for a bitter bread,
The perishing of poets for renown,
The shriek of shame from the concealing waves.
Ah, me! how many heart-beats day by day
Go to make up the life of the vast town!
O myriad dead in unremembered graves!
O torrent of the living down Broadway!

Richard Hovey

WIND OF ARCADY

O Little Wind of Arcady! The tired old city's
waiting you,
Waiting mid the fog, the cold, the slush drifts and
the rain,
Haunted by the memory of sunny days and happy
days,
Waiting for the voice of you singing once again.

Through the days, the dreary days of winter we
were missing you,
Far away in sunny lands we knew there was your
song;
That was thought to cheer us then and keep us
patient waiting you.
Hurry little perfumed wind, the hours are grey
and long.

Ah, whisper you are coming soon O Little Wind of Arcady,
Bearing in your open arms the shy young flowers of spring,
Bringing us poor city bound, grown weary in the winter time,
Happiness that holds the heart in every song you sing.

Edmund Leamy

BROADWAY

What hurrying human tides, or day or night!
What passions, winnings, losses, ardors, swim thy waters!
What whirls of evil, bliss and sorrow, stem thee!
What curious questioning glances — glints of love!
Leer, envy, scorn, contempt, hope, aspiration!
Thou portal — thou arena — thou of the myriad long-drawn lines and groups!
(Could but thy flagstones, curbs, facades, tell their inimitable tales;
Thy windows rich, and huge hotels — thy sidewalks wide;)
Thou of the endless sliding, mincing, shuffling feet!
Thou, like the parti-colored world itself — like infinite, teeming, mocking life!
Thou visor'd, vast, unspeakable show and lesson!

Walt Whitman

A BUTTERFLY IN WALL STREET

WINGED wanderer from clover meadows sweet,
Where all day long beneath a smiling sky
You drained the wild-flowers' cups of honey dry
And heard the drowsy winds their love repeat,
What idle zephyr, whispering deceit,
Captured your heart and tempted you to fly
Unto this noisy town and vainly pry
Into the secrets of this busy street?

To me your unexpected presence brings
A thought of fragrant pastures, buds and flowers,
And sleepy brooks, and cattle in the fold;
Or, watching as you soar on trembling wings,
I think for those who toil through weary hours
You are a type of their uncertain gold!

Frank Dempster Sherman

TOWN AND COUNTRY

An Ode

O! WELL may poets make a fuss
In summer time, and sigh "*O rus!*"
Of London pleasures sick:
My heart is all at pant to rest
In Greenwood shades — my eyes detest
This endless meal of brick!

What joy have I in June's return?
My feet are parched, my eyeballs burn,
I scent no flowery gust:

But faint the flagging zephyr springs,
With dry Macadam on its wings,
And turns me "dust to dust."

My sun his daily course renews
Due east, but with no Eastern dews;
The path is dry and hot!
His setting shows more tamely still,
He sinks behind no purple hill,
But down a chimney's pot!

O! but to hear the milkmaid blithe,
Or early mower whet his scythe
The dewy meads among! —
My grass is of that sort, alas!
That makes no hay — called sparrow-grass
By folks of vulgar tongue!

O! but to smell the woodbines sweet!
I think of cowslip cups — but meet
With very vile rebuffs!
For meadow-buds I get a whiff
Of Cheshire cheese, — or only sniff
The turtle made at Cuff's.

How tenderly Rousseau reviewed
His periwinkles! — mine are stewed!
My rose blooms on a gown! —
I hunt in vain for eglantine,
And find my blue-bell on the sign
That marks the Bell and Crown:

Where are ye, birds! that blithely wing
From tree to tree, and gayly sing
Or mourn in thickets deep?
My cuckoo has some ware to sell,
The watchman is my Philomel,
My blackbird is a sweep!

Where are ye, linnet, lark, and thrush!
That perch on leafy bough and bush,
And tune the various song?
Two hurdy-gurdists, and a poor
Street-Handel grinding at my door,
Are all my "tuneful throng."

Where are ye, early-purling streams,
Whose waves reflect the morning beams,
And colors of the skies?
My rills are only puddle-drains
From shambles, or reflect the stains
Of calimanco-dyes!

Sweet are the little brooks that run
O'er pebbles glancing in the sun,
Singing in soothing tones: —
Not thus the city streamlets flow;
They make no music as they go,
Though never "off the stones."

Where are ye, pastoral pretty sheep,
That wont to bleat, and frisk, and leap,
Beside your woolly dams?

Alas! instead of harmless crooks,
My Corydons use iron hooks,
And skin — not shear — the lambs.

The pipe whereon, in olden day,
The Arcadian herdsman used to play
Sweetly, here soundeth not;
But merely breathes unwholesome fumes,
Meanwhile the city boor consumes
The rank weed — "piping hot."

All rural things are vilely mocked,
On every hand the sense is shocked,
With objects hard to bear:
Shades — vernal shades! — where wine is sold!
And, for a turfy bank, behold
An Ingram's rustic chair!

Where are ye, London meads and bowers,
And gardens redolent of flowers
Wherein the zephyr wons!
Alas! Moor Fields are fields no more:
See Hatton's Garden bricked all o'er;
And that bare wood — St. John's.

No pastoral scenes procure me peace;
I hold no Leasowes in my lease,
No cot set round with trees:
No sheep-white hill my dwelling flanks;
And omnium furnishes my banks
With brokers — not with bees.

O! well may poets make a fuss
In summer time, and sigh "*O rus!*"
Of city pleasures sick:
My heart is all at pant to rest
In greenwood shades — my eyes detest
That endless meal of brick!

Thomas Hood

AT A SUBWAY EXIT

Feet, feet, feet,
The endless tread and beat
Of clicking heel or shuffling sole
Pouring out from the subway hole.

Pretty feet, trim and neat,
Trip the steps to gain the street,
Feather-light and blithely gay,
Eager to be on their way —
Life is young, brimful of joys,
Naught they know of what annoys.

Lead feet, dead feet,
Bearing corpses to the street,
Crawling up with hopeless drag,
Wander aimlessly, and lag
As though they had left life behind
While they keep on their tread-mill grind.

High heels, low heels,
Worn heels, no heels,

Hurry up and scurry out,
Twist and turn and dart about.
Squeaking newness, wornout toe,
Whence do you come, where do you go?
Where do you carry these human bubbles —
To beckoning joys or frowning troubles?

My eyes are lost in the endless stream,
And my senses numbed in a lotus-dream
By the pounding thud and dull repeat
Of the thump, thump, thump on the pavement street.
Will they ever end their upward toil,
And the human caldron cease to boil?
A moment's ebb, then the train's loud roar,
And the lava belches forth once more
From the subway crater, and thousands of feet
Jostle their loads up into the street,
And scatter them on every hand
As they were so much wind-blown sand.
Heigh-ho for the joy, and, alas, for the care,
The myriad mingle of life is there!

Joseph Morris

SHOPS

Oh, London has the bold shops, the silver and the gold shops,
Rich with all the treasures in the wide world found.
Oh, there you'll find the fairest shops, the cheapest and the rarest shops,
All ablaze with color on the pearl-grey ground!

They deck themselves at daytime with the colors
of the Maytime;
They deck themselves at twilight with a glad and
lyric glee;
But oh — the fusty, frowsy shops, those old marine,
Limehousey shops —
Oh, they're the shops that most I love — the only
shops for me!

Thomas Burke

THE TELEGRAPH BOY

Death bids his heralds go their way
On red-rimmed bicycles to-day.
Arrayed in blue with streak of red,
A boy bears tidings of the dead:
He pedals merrily along,
Whistling the chorus of a song;
Passing the time of day with friends,
Until the journey almost ends.
Then, slowing down, he scans each gate
For the doom'd name upon the plate.
That found, he loudly knocks and rings,
Hands in the yellow missive; sings
His song. The maid says at the door,
"No answer!" and he's off once more.

. . . . . .

No answer through the empty years!
No answer but a mother's tears!

Edward Shillito

THE CROWDED STREET

Let me move slowly through the street,
Filled with an ever-shifting train,
Amid the sound of steps that beat
The murmuring walks like autumn rain.

How fast the flitting figures come!
The mild, the fierce, the stony face;
Some bright with thoughtless smiles, and some
Where secret tears have left their trace.

They pass — to toil, to strife, to rest;
To halls in which the feast is spread;
To chambers where the funeral guest
In silence sits beside the dead.

And some to happy homes repair,
Where children, pressing cheek to cheek,
With mute caresses shall declare
The tenderness they cannot speak.

And some, who walk in calmness here,
Shall shudder as they reach the door
Where one who made their dwelling dear,
Its flower, its light, is seen no more.

Youth, with pale cheek and slender frame,
And dreams of greatness in thine eye!
Go'st thou to build an early name,
Or early in the task to die?

Keen son of trade, with eager brow!
Who is now fluttering in thy snare?
Thy golden fortunes, tower they now,
Or melt the glittering spires in air?

Who of this crowd to-night shall tread
The dance till daylight gleam again?
Who sorrow o'er the untimely dead?
Who writhe in throes of mortal pain?

Some, famine-struck, shall think how long
The cold dark hours, how slow the light!
And some, who flaunt amid the throng,
Shall hide in dens of shame to-night.

Each, where his tasks or pleasures call,
They pass, and heed each other not,
There is who heeds, who holds them all,
In His large love and boundless thought.

These struggling tides of life that seem
In wayward, aimless course to tend,
Are eddies of the mighty stream
That rolls to its appointed end.

William Cullen Bryant

A LONDON IDYLL

A HEAVY sky, and a drizzling rain
And the lamps in rigid rows;
Long smears of light all down the street
Where a lean cat stalking goes;

Blank, save a glimmer here and there
The gaunt dark houses stand —
And a man and a girl against the gate
Whispering hand in hand.

There is a little dripping sound
Of rain from off the roof;
And gleaming like black armor goes
The policeman's waterproof.
He crosses the road to give them room
As he takes his evening beat;
He also knows that heaven may look
Like a rainy London street.

John Presland

THE CATS OF COBBLESTONE STREET

Close the high-stooped houses stood
In that quiet neighborhood,
Undisturbed by trucks or vans,
Pushcarts with their fruit and pans,
Scavengers with sticks and bags,
Or the junk-man crying "Rags!" —
No, not even gutter-brats.
But, at night, it swarmed with cats!
Slinking cats and blinking cats,
Cats to chase and cats to clamber,
(Eyes like topaz, eyes like amber),
Round about each garbage can,
In and out of areas ran, —

Scrawny cats, with deep aversion
To the Maltese or the Persian
(Soft and sleek that purr and mew
Where the wealthy avenue
Boasts its brownstone "No-admittance!"
To all ragged stranger kittens).

Here, as street-lamps sparked and sputtered
O'er the cobbled street unguttered,
Shade to glare and glare to shade
Moved the feline promenade, —
Brindled, blacker than the Devil,
Toms and tabbies in a revel,
Like familiars known to witches,
Like the mouser brought such riches
To Dick Whittington in history,
Like Egyptian cats of mystery,
Crouching, scampering, stalking, squalling,
Spitting fire or caterwauling,
Licking sores, rampant or sleeping, —
'Faith, it set my skin to creeping
As I viewed them, perched on high
In my window next the sky!

Every window blankly glistened,
And the dark street slept — and listened.
Clap-clap-clap! A footfall faint.
Then the Elevated's plaint,
Grinding on the curve afar.
Then a distant surface-car

Jarring past; a "cop's" night-stick
Rapping quickly on the brick;
Meanwhile — cats — in swirling mazes,
'Mid the harbor-fog's night hazes
That came seeping from the river
Setting dainty dreams ashiver
To the long lugubrious moaning
Of the river-craft intoning, —
Cats that overflowed each curbing
With an aimlessness disturbing,
Prowling, yowling, — yowling, prowling,
With such grinning, and such scowling!
Cat Luculluses that sought,
'Mid much refuse, feasts unbought;
Cats that wooed and cats that fought!
Oh, for some black plague of rats
That would rid my street of cats!

They would slither 'twixt your feet,
Coming home along the street.
As you fumbled for your keys
They would stalk by twos and threes
Like fierce bandits at your back,
Wildly whiskered, cloaked in black.
They would haunt the steps thereafter
Spreading scandal, faint with laughter
Of a still, demoniac kind
That was never to my mind.
And their cries! So strangely human, —
Gasping child — heart-broken woman!

So one's dreams (each dawn upbraided)
With gigantic cats paraded;
Cats that walked the moonlit sill
In a pageant never still,
Cats that, writhing, seemed to rise
From the street and fill the skies
Like a locust-cloud by day,
Like a feline Milky Way,
Where the moon, great puss of space,
With one cloud-paw washed its face,
Licked its lips and grinned again
Down on scampering mice and men!

William Rose Benét

THE NEWSBOY

Paper! Paper!
Over the rattle and roar of the street,
The drag and the shuffle of myriad feet,
In sunshine, in drizzle, I send forth my cry
To you — you of multitudes hurrying by.
The paper's for you, and I've sought far and long;
I've peered at the sick, at the squalid, the strong,
Lest somehow I miss you. Dull office hours close;
From subway, department store, restaurant flows
A mad stream of humanity — lo, I am there.
Late theatres darken — I cleave the night air
With loud invitation that summons, demands:
This paper, I'll put it — I must — in your hands.
The traffic can't stop me. Your signal descried,
I'll dodge and I'll wiggle and skip to your side.

Paper! Paper!
The life of the world for the half of a day
You've been buried in self and a ledger! Away
With ignorance ancient and moss-grown! Come, feast
On the succulent entrée of headlines at least.
All the scandals, catastrophes, accidents, fires
That heaven permits and the devil inspires —
I'll sell them to you. Strikes, murders you'll see.
(Ill winds for some people, they blow good to me;
For the worse and the wilder things are for the race,
The more do I thrive.) Should you choose, you shall trace
A ministry's doings, a surgical feat,
Inventions, philanthropies, weddings, the beat
Of heart wrung with sympathies deep and intense.—
It all shall be yours for a couple of cents.

St. Clair Adams

CARCASSONNE

How old I am! I'm eighty years!
I've worked both hard and long.
Yet, patient as my life has been,
One dearest sight I have not seen —
It almost seems a wrong;
A dream I had when life was new,
Alas, our dreams! they come not true;

I thought to see fair Carcassonne,
That lovely city — Carcassonne!

One sees it dimly from the height
Beyond the mountains blue,
Fain would I walk five weary leagues —
I do not mind the road's fatigues —
Through morn and evening's dew.
But bitter frosts would fall at night,
And on the grapes that yellow blight!
I could not go to Carcassonne,
I never went to Carcassonne.

They say it is as gay all times
As holidays at home!
The gentles ride in gay attire,
And in the sun each gilded spire
Shoots up, like those of Rome!
The Bishop the procession leads,
And generals curb their prancing steeds.
Alas! I know not Carcassonne!
Alas! I saw not Carcassonne!

Our vicar's right! he preaches loud,
And bids us to beware;
He says, "O! guard the weakest part,
And most the traitor in the heart
Against ambition's snare!"
Perhaps in Autumn I can find
Two sunny days with gentle wind;
I then could go to Carcassonne,
I still could go to Carcassonne!

My God and Father! pardon me
If this my wish offends!
One sees some hope, more high than he,
In age, as in his infancy,
To which his heart ascends!
My wife, my son have seen Narbonne;
My grandson went to Perpignan;
But I have not seen Carcassonne!
But I have not seen Carcassonne!

Thus sighed a peasant bent with age,
Half dreaming in his chair;
I said, "My friend, come go with me,
To-morrow then thine eyes shall see
Those streets that seem so fair."
That night there came for passing soul
The church-bell's low and solemn toll.
He never saw gay Carcassonne.
Who has not known a Carcassonne?

Gustave Nadaud
(*Translated by M. E. W. Sherwood*)

A CABARET DANCER

I KNEW a little dancer, a fairy little dancer,
Her heart was like a lily bud, her eyes were drops of dew.
Her lips, to every sweetest thought, were tremulous with answer.
Dear love was but a land of dreams her soul could loiter through.

I knew her when her dancing was still a maid's romancing,
When motion was but ecstasy and ecstasy was song.
Upon the tangles of her hair the morning sun was glancing,
How could she dream so early of midnight's throbbing gong?

I knew a little dancer, a weary little dancer,
Her heart no longer poses when her body twists and turns.
Her soul has lost its passions and her flesh alone can answer,
When violins are calling and the flaring spotlight burns.

I knew a little dancer, a fairy little dancer.
Ah, for the broken lily bud her heart became in town!
Her smiles are signs, for now no more sweet music can entrance her,
And love is but a poppy field her feet have trampled down.

Lewis Worthington Smith

THE STAR IN THE CITY

As down the city street
I pass at the twilight hour,
'Mid the noise of wheels and hoofs
That grind on the stones, and beat; —

Upward, by spire and tower,
Over the chimneys and roofs
Climbs my glance to the skies,
And I see, with a glad surprise,
A mist with a core of light.
  Slowly, as grows the night, —
As the sky turns blue from gray, —
Slowly it beams more bright,
And keeps with me on my way.
  Soul of the twilight star
That leads me from afar,
Spirit that keener glows
As the daylight darker grows;
That leaps the chasm of blue
Where the cross-street thunders through,
And follows o'er roof and spire,
In the night-time soaring higher;
I know thee, and only I,
Thou comrade of the sky —
Star of the poet's heart,
The light and soul of his art.

Richard Watson Gilder

CITY APRIL

I HAVE not seen a tree take on
The mist of April green,
Or heard a thrush at any dawn
To guess what it could mean . . .

And yet, that it is spring I know,
For everybody stops

To wonder at the jonquil glow
In all the flower shops.

George O'Neil

BALLAD OF THE LONDONER

Evening falls on the smoky walls,
And the railings drip with rain,
And I will cross the old river
To see my girl again.

The great and solemn-gliding tram,
Love's still-mysterious car,
Has many a light of gold and white,
And a single dark red star.

I know a garden in a street
Which no one ever knew;
I know a rose beyond the Thames,
Where flowers are pale and few.

James Elroy Flecker

BROADWAY AT MIDNIGHT

The theaters are out, and on Broadway
Assembles now the midnight's motley show —
A moving panorama in the glow
Of myriad lamps that make a mimic day.
Here Wealth and Poverty together stray;
Here Virtue walks with Vice, and does not know;
And ever up and down the pavements go
The tireless actors of an endless play.

Serene above the busy whirl of life,
This human comedy, this rush and roar
And turmoil of interminable cars,
Like mute spectators of our mortal strife,
From their blue balconies forevermore
Look down in beauty the immortal stars.

Frank Dempster Sherman

IN THE DARK CITY

THERE is a harper plays
Through the long watches of the lonely night
When, like a cemetery,
Sleeps the dark city, with her millions, laid each in his tomb.

I feel it in my dream, but when I wake —
Suddenly, like some secret thing not to be overheard,
It ceases.
And the gray night grows dumb.

Only in memory
Linger those veiled adagios, fading, fading . . .
Till, with the morning, they are lost.

What door was opened then?
What worlds, undreamed of, lie around us in our sleep,
That yet we may not know?
Where is it one sat playing

Over and over, with such high and dreadful peace,
The passion and sorrow of the eternal doom?

John Hall Wheelock

SOUTH STATE STREET, CHICAGO

I

Rows of blankly box-like buildings
Raise their sodden architecture
Into the poised lyric of the sky.
At their feet, pawn-shops and burlesque theatres
Yawn beneath their livid confetti.
In the pawn-shop windows, violins,
Cut-glass bowls and satchels mildly blink
Upon the mottled turbulence outside,
And sit with that detached assurance
Gripping things inanimate.
Near them, slyly shaded cabarets
Stand in bland and ornate sleep,
And the glassy luridness
Of penny-arcades flays the eyes.
The black crowd clatters like an idiot's wrath.

II

Wander with me down this street
Where the spectral night is caught
Like moon-paint on a colorless lane . . .
On this corner stands a woman
Sleekly, sulkily complacent,
Like a tigress nibbling bits of sugar.
At her side, a brawny, white-faced man

Whose fingers waltz upon his checkered suit,
Searches for one face amidst the crowd.
(His smile is like a rambling sword.)
His elbows almost touch a snowy girl
Whose body blooms with cool withdrawal.
From her little nook of peaceful scorn
She casts unseeing eyes upon the crowd.
Near her stands a weary newsboy
With a sullenly elfin face.
The night has leaned too intimately
On the frightened scampering of his soul.
But to this old, staidly patient woman
With her softly wintry eyes,
Night bends down in gentle revelation
Undisturbed by joy or hatred.
At her side two factory girls
In slyly jaunty hats and swaggering coats,
Weave a twinkling summer with their words:
A summer where the night parades
Rakishly, and like a gold Beau Brummel.
With a gnome-like impudence
They thrust their little, pink tongues out
At men who sidle past.
To them, the frantic dinginess of day
Has melted to caressing restlessness
Tingling with the pride of breasts and hips.
At their side two dainty, languid girls
Playing with their suavely tangled dresses,
Touch the black crowd with unsearching eyes.
But the old man on the corner,
Bending over his cane like some tired warrior

Resting on a sword, peers at the crowd
With the smouldering disdain
Of a King whipped out of his domain.
For a moment he smiles uncertainly,
Then wears a look of frail sternness.

Musty, Rabelaisian odors stray
From this naïvely gilded family-entrance
And make the body of a vagrant
Quiver as though unseen roses grazed him.
His face is blackly stubbled emptiness
Swerving to the rotted prayers of eyes.
Yet, sometimes his thin arm leaps out
And hangs a moment in the air,
As though he raised a violin of hate
And lacked the strength to play it.
A woman lurches from the family-entrance.
With tense solicitude she hugs
Her can of beer against her stunted bosom
And mumbles to herself.
The trampled blasphemy upon her face
Holds up, in death, its watery, barren eyes.
Indifferently, she brushes past the vagrant:
Life has peeled away her sense of touch.

III

With groping majesty, the endless crowd
Pounds its searching chant of feet
Down this tawdrily resplendent street.
People stray into a burlesque theatre
Framed with scarlet, blankly rotund girls.

Here a burly cattle-raiser walks
With the grace of wind-swept prairie grass.
Behind him steps a slender clerk
Tendering his sprightly stridency
To the stolid, doll-like girl beside him.
At his side a heavy youth
Dully stands beneath his swaggering mask;
And a smiling man in black and white
Walks, like some Pierrot grown middle-aged.

Mutely twinkling fragments of a romance:
Tiny lights stand over this cabaret.
Men and women jovially emboldened
Stroll beneath the curtained entrance,
And their laughs, like softly brazen cow-bells,
Change the scene to a strange Pastoral.
Hectic shepherdesses drunk with night,
Women mingle their coquettish colors. . . .
Suddenly, a man leaps out
From the doorway's blazing pallor,
Smashing into the drab sidewalk.
His drunken lips and eyelids break apart
Like a clown in sudden suicide.
Then the mottled nakedness
Of the scene comes, like a blow.

Stoically crushed in hovering grey
Night lies coldly on this street.
Momentary sounds crash into night
Like ghostly curses stifled in their birth. . . .
And over all the blankly box-like buildings

Raise their sodden architecture
Into the poised lyric of the sky.

Maxwell Bodenheim

CITY SPARROWS

Within the stone Sahara of the Town
A green oasis lies the open Square:
Hark to the noisy caravans of brown,
Intrepid Sparrows, — Arabs of the air!

Frank Dempster Sherman

A TOWN WINDOW

Beyond my window in the night
Is but a drab inglorious street,
Yet there the frost and clean starlight
As over Warwick woods are sweet.

Under the grey drift of the town
The crocus works among the mould
As eagerly as those that crown
The Warwick spring in flame and gold.

And when the tramway down the hill
Across the cobbles moans and rings,
There is about my window-sill
The tumult of a thousand wings.

John Drinkwater

THE REGENTS' EXAMINATION

Muffled sounds of the city climbing to me at the window,
Here in the summer noon-tide students busily writing,
Children of quaint-clad immigrants, fresh from the hut and the Ghetto,
Writing of pious Æneas and the funeral rites of Anchises.
Old-World credo and custom, alien accents and features,
Plunged in the free-school hopper, grist for the Anglo-Saxons —
Old-World sweetness and light, and fiery struggle of heroes,
Flashed on the blinking peasants, dull with the grime of their bondage!
Race that are infant in knowledge, ancient in grief and traditions —
Lore that is tranquil with age and starry with gleams of the future —
What is the thing that will come from the might of the elements blending?
Neuter and safe shall it be? Or a flame to burst us asunder?

Jessie Wallace Hughan

HYMN OF THE CITY

Not in the solitude
Alone may man commune with heaven, or see,
Only in savage wood
And sunny vale, the present Deity;
Or only hear his voice
Where the winds whisper and the waves rejoice.

Even here do I behold
Thy steps, Almighty! — here, amidst the crowd,
Through the great city rolled,
With everlasting murmur deep and loud —
Choking the ways that wind
'Mongst the proud piles, the work of human kind.

Thy golden sunshine comes
From the round heaven, and on their dwellings lies
And lights their inner homes;
For them thou fill'st with air the unbounded skies,
And givest them the stores
Of ocean, and the harvest of its shores.

Thy spirit is around,
Quickening the restless mass that sweeps along;
And this eternal sound —
Voices and footfalls of the numberless throng —
Like the resounding sea,
Or like the rainy tempest, speaks of Thee.

And when the hour of rest
Comes, like a calm upon the mid-sea brine,

Hushing its billowy breast —
The quiet of that moment too is thine;
It breathes of Him who keeps
The vast and helpless city while it sleeps.

William Cullen Bryant

CITY RAIN

When all my lonely window pane
Is marshalled with the shouting rain
And squalid roofs of shining tin
Grin at the shower and drink it in,
And all the boulevards are sheets
Of glist'ning street-lamp stars, and walls
Are wobbly with gay waterfalls;
When noises wander in the gloom
Like draggled cats who find no room
To dry their fur in; that's the time
When every straight-cut edge and line
Gives up its cruelty; the stain
Of day is scrubbed off by the rain.

R. V. A. Sheldon

THE PRELUDE

(*Selection*, VII. 149–210; 671–736)

Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
Of a too busy world! Before me flow,
Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes —
With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe —

On strangers, of all ages; the quick dance
Of colors, lights, and forms; the deafening din;
The comers and the goers face to face,
Face after face; the string of dazzling wares,
Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
And all the tradesman's honors overhead:
Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page,
With letters huge inscribed from top to toe,
Stationed above the door, like guardian saints;
There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
Or physiognomies of real men.
Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea,
Boyle, Shakspeare, Newton, or the attractive head
Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.

Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,
Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
Abruptly into some sequestered nook,
Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud!
At leisure, thence, through tracts of thin resort,
And sights and sounds that come at intervals,
We take our way. A raree-show is here,
With children gathered round; another street
Presents a company of dancing dogs,
Or dromedary, with an antic pair
Of monkeys on his back; a minstrel band
Of Savoyards; or, single and alone,
An English ballad-singer. Private courts,
Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes
Thrilled by some female vendor's scream, belike
The very shrillest of all London's cries,

May then entangle our impatient steps;
Conducted through those labyrinths, unawares,
To privileged regions and inviolate,
Where from their airy lodges studious lawyers
Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.

Thence back into the throng, until we reach,
Following the tide that slackens by degrees,
Some half-frequented scene, where wider streets
Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.
Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls;
Advertisements, of giant-size, from high
Press forward, in all colors, on the sight;
These, bold in conscious merit, lower down;
That, fronted with a most imposing word,
Is, peradventure, one in masquerade.
As on the broadening causeway we advance,
Behold, turned upwards, a face hard and strong
In lineaments, and red with over-toil.
'Tis one encountered here and everywhere;
A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,
And stumping on his arms. In sailor's garb
Another lies at length, beside a range
Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed
Upon the smooth flat stones: the Nurse is here,
The Bachelor, that loves to sun himself,
The military Idler, and the Dame,
That field-ward takes her walk with decent steps.

. . . . . .

What say you, then,
To times, when half the city shall break out

Full of one passion, vengeance, rage, or fear?
To executions, to a street on fire,
Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights
Take one, — that ancient festival, the Fair,
Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
And named of St. Bartholomew; there, see
A work completed to our hands, that lays,
If any spectacle on earth can do,
The whole creative powers of man asleep! —
For once, the Muse's help will we implore,
And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
Above the press and danger of the crowd,
Upon some showman's platform. What a shock
For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din,
Barbarian and infernal, — a phantasma,
Monstrous in color, motion, shape, sight, sound!
Below, the open space, through every nook
Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive
With heads; the midway region, and above,
Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies;
With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
And children whirling in their roundabouts;
With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,
And crack the voice in rivalship, the crowd
Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons
Grimacing, writhing, screaming, — him who grinds
The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves,
Rattles the salt-box, thumps the kettle-drum,
And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,
The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel,

Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering
plumes. —
All moveables of wonder, from all parts,
Are here — Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs,
The Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig,
The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,
Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl,
The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous
craft
Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet-shows,
All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things,
All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts
Of man, his dulness, madness, and their feats
All jumbled up together, to compose
A Parliament of Monsters. Tents and Booths
Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast mill,
Are vomiting, receiving on all sides,
Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms.

Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
Of what the mighty City is herself,
To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
Living amid the same perpetual whirl
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
To one identity, by differences
That have no law, no meaning, and no end —
Oppression, under which even highest minds
Must labor, whence the strongest are not free.
But though the picture weary out the eye,

By nature an unmanageable sight,
It is not wholly so to him who looks
In steadiness, who hath among least things
An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.

William Wordsworth

THE GHOST WIND

Beside a city florist's shop
To-day I chanced to meet
A little ghost that searched the town
On hesitating feet;
And as a lost and kindred soul,
To one as lost as he
He brought the fragrance of old dream
And far-off Arcady.

He brushed my cheek with pungent kiss
Of clover and of thyme,
Of hollyhocks and daffodils
Amid the city's grime.
And lotus-eyed I walked, forgot
The cares that sought to greet —
The comrade of a vagrant wind,
A little lost and fragrant wind,
The ghost of an old garden wind,
That roamed the street.

And mid the grey day and the rain,
For me, 'twas long ago again.

Edmund Leamy

CHIMNEY-POTS

To me at my fifth-floor window
The chimney-pots in rows
Are sets of pipes pandean
For every wind that blows;

And the smoke that whirls and eddies
In a thousand times and keys
Is really a visible music
Set to my reveries.

O monstrous pipes, melodious
With fitful tune and dream,
The clouds are your only audience,
Her thought is your only theme!

William Ernest Henley

CITY OF ORGIES

City of orgies, walks and joys,
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will one day make you illustrious,
Not the pageants of you, not your shifting tableaus, your spectacles, repay me,
Not the interminable rows of your houses, nor the ships at the wharves,
Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows with goods in them,
Nor to converse with learn'd persons, or bear my share in the soirée or feast;

Not those, but as I pass O Manhattan, your frequent
and swift flash of eyes offering me love,
Offering response to my own — these repay me,
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.

Walt Whitman

ON THE CITY STREET

Free of all enslavement,
Free of fret and care,
Youth, upon the pavement,
Dances to the air
Of a street piano
While a joyous note
Comes in shrill soprano
From each childish throat.

As the tune is ringing
Through the dingy street
Blithe young bodies swinging
Dance on rhythmic feet;
'Mid the city's clamor
'Mid the smoke and grime
Comes the golden glamour
Of a vanished time.

Here, in garments scanty,
Somehow we can see,
Many a young bacchante,
Many a dryad free,
Somehow we are glancing
At a pagan clan,

— Fauns and wood-nymphs dancing
To the Pipes o' Pan.

Berton Braley

LONDON

This great grey city that bred me and mine —
Supreme, mysterious, dirty and divine —
Is made up all of contrasts, light and gloom.

It has green hills and parks where flowers bloom;
And shadowed pathways where young lips are shy
And warm hands tangle while the night slips by;
Deserts of humble brick, resigned and drear;
And crowded taverns, full of noise and beer;
Thronged streets where jostle theatre and hotel,
And stately terraces where rich folk dwell. . . .

It has black alleys, and most dismal plains
Crossed by long, steady, fire-emitting trains;
Foul slums and palaces, prisons and spires,
And suburbs where the jaundiced clerk expires.

But love and hope are always with us, too;
And such bright eyes, to make the sky seem blue!

All of my life I have spent up and down
Adventurously, in this unending town,
And magic things have seen at Fortune Green
And fairies loitering in a grove at Sheen;
Chelsea made crimson in the sunset glare;
The dawn transfiguring even Russell Square. . . .

And I have watched, all through a summer's day,
The brown-winged barges loaded up with hay,
And seen the heavy cargo-steamers slide
Past Woolwich Ferry, with the flowing tide;
Found joy in travel on a motor 'bus,
And glowing worlds Within the Radius!

And so, for songs, my heart must needs repeat
The cries and whispers of the London street.

Douglas Goldring

A SUMMER IDYL

THE scene: A public city square,
With crowded benches here and there.
The time: A drowsy afternoon,
Charged with the heady wine of June.
Chief actors: Voice, Law's voice, supreme
And harsh with petty power: and Dream,
A vagrant sprite that stops to play
'Round one old head unkempt and gray.

THE DREAM:

Ah! rest. How far off seems the street —
Its heat still tingles in my feet,
But Lord! how sweet this is, how sweet! —
And O! the shade, this blessed shade
That all the little leaves have made —
The little leaves — they're whispering now —
Whispering? They're singing on the bough!
How clear and sweet the whole tree sings —

Tree? It's a golden bird with wings!
How soft its back is! Sweet to lie
Snug in its feathers here and fly
Where Heaven is so wide and clear —

THE VOICE:

Hey! Set up straight; ye can't sleep here!

THE DREAM:

The nurse-maid smiled,
But she looked kind; so did the child.
What dimpled cheeks! so round, so fair,
Like peaches. Peaches, everywhere!
Wait, little boy, don't climb the trees.
See how the fruit swings in the breeze.
Lie here with me until they fall.
Here where the grass is thick and tall,
Stretch yourself out and lie at ease.
Don't shake! don't shake! don't shake the trees!
Here they come pelting down like rain —

THE VOICE:

Here, Bo! I warn ye onct again.

THE DREAM:

... His coat is blue,
Yet Heaven has the self-same hue;
How odd! ... His belt looks tight in back,
And mine — it never was so slack.
Somewhere, somewhere, there's bread and meat;
Somewhere, perhaps, but then the street —

If I could wet my face and hair
With water from that fountain there —
How sparklingly the ripples break,
And what a pleasant sound they make!
Drip! drip! . . . the mill-wheel turns so slow,
So slow — so slow — Ah! there's a fish!
He's in the net! Now for a dish
That any royal king might wish!
O! peaceful pipe beside the fire —
The moon's up now and rising higher.
Snug is the camp, crisp-cool the night,
The embers flare up, warm and bright!
The waves of heat that beat, beat, beat,
Upon the weary, way-worn feet —

THE VOICE:

I warned you twice an' now you're done,
Git out o' here! Move on! Move on!

T. A. Daly

IN A CHOP-SUEY JOINT

Climb up a flight of darkly-winding stair,
Push through a swinging door, and you are there.
The ceiling lowers low with strange design
Where fire-mouthed dragons coil and intertwine.
The joss-sticks' thin blue vapor creeps about
Like prisoned spirit seeking some way out,
And slipshod waiters shuffle silent by
With rustling garments and quaint-slanted eye.
If you but fold your sight you are away
In some quaint yellow corner of Cathay,

Lost in a garden of hand-monstered trees
And exquisite uncouth barbarities
Where threats a eunuch one-eyed like a star
Towering malignant with a scimitar.

Now the sun-smitten highway, where there plies
His trade the beggar with self-blinded eyes.
Now, drowning pastoral matin, woodland song,
From a great temple booms a brazen gong. . . .

The streets with chattering hordes are oversped
Like swarming vermin in a beggar's head;
And, here and there, amongst the long-cued horde,
A coolie-borne palanquin speaks a Lord . . .
The spell is broken . . . Here's some tea to quaff . . .
Hark! from behind yon flower-damasked screen
There breaks a coarse, loud-mouthed, salacious
laugh
Pregnant with goatish lusts and deeds obscene . . .
It is some tawdry prostitute, I guess,
Whose voice betrays her painted wantonness.

Harry Kemp

CLOSING THE GRILL

Crystal chandeliers out-gleaming the stars —
Soft pink shades casting a mellow light —
Napery, white as snow on a roof —
Chinaware, dainty as a baby's birthday ring.

Sleek-haired men with females
Of silk, satin and cosmetics

Patter correctly over the parquet floor
Through the mirrored doorway.

Waiters' imitation shirt-bosoms are displaced
As tables are stripped
Exposing the pine wood
Topped by burlap.

David Sentner

BROADWAY

HERE surge the ceaseless caravans,
Here throbs the city's heart,
And down the street each takes his way
To play his little part.

The tides of life flow on, flow on,
And Laughter meets Despair;
A heart might break along Broadway . . .
I wonder who would care?

Charles Hanson Towne

NEW YORK AT NIGHT

A NEAR horizon whose sharp jags
Cut brutally into a sky
Of leaden heaviness, and crags
Of houses lift their masonry
Ugly and foul, and chimneys lie
And snort, outlined against the gray
Of low-hung cloud. I hear the sigh

The goaded city gives, not day
Nor night can ease her heart, her anguished labours
stay.

Below, straight streets, monotonous,
From north and south, from east and west,
Stretch glittering; and luminous
Above, one tower tops the rest
And holds aloft man's constant quest:
Time! Joyless emblem of the greed
Of millions, robbers of the best
Which earth can give, the vulgar creed
Has seared upon the night its flaming ruthless screed.

O Night! whose soothing presence brings
The quiet shining of the stars.
O Night! whose cloak of darkness clings
So intimately close that scars
Are hid from our own eyes. Beggars
By day, our wealth is having night
To burn our souls before altars
Dim and tree-shadowed, where the light
Is shed from a young moon, mysteriously bright.

Where art thou hiding, where thy peace?
This is the hour, but thou art not.
Will waking tumult never cease?
Hast thou thy votary forgot?
Nature forsakes this man-begot
And festering wilderness, and now
The long still hours are here, no jot

Of dear communing do I know;
Instead the glaring, man-filled city groans below!

Amy Lowell

SONNET

To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven, — to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel, — an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by:
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

John Keats

THE CITY

A SHINING city, one
Happy in snow and sun,
And singing in the rain
A paradisal strain. . . .
Here is a dream to keep,
O Builders, from your sleep.

O foolish Builders, wake,
Take your trowels, take

The poet's dream, and build
The city song has willed,
That every stone may sing
And all your roads may ring
With happy wayfaring.

John Drinkwater

LONDON JUNE

Rank odors ride on every breeze;
Skyward a hundred towers loom;
And factories throb and workshops wheeze,
And children pine in secret gloom.
To squabbling birds the roofs declaim
Their little tale of misery;
And, smiling over murk and shame,
A wild rose blows by Bermondsey.

Where every traffic-thridden street
Is ribboned o'er with shade and shine,
And webbed with wire and choked with heat;
Where smoke with fouler smokes entwine;
And where, at evening, darkling lanes
Fume with a sickly ribaldry —
Above the squalors and the pains,
A wild rose blows by Bermondsey.

Somewhere beneath a nest of tiles
My little garret window squats,
Staring across the cruel miles,
And wondering of kindlier spots.

An organ, just across the way,
Sobs out its rag-time melody;
But in my heart it seems to play:
A Wild Rose blows by Bermondsey!

And dreams of happy morning hills
And woodlands laced with greenest boughs,
Are mine to-day amid the ills
Of Tooley Street and wharfside sloughs.
Though Cherry Gardens reek and roar,
And engines gasp their horrid glee;
I mark their ugliness no more:
A wild rose blows by Bermondsey.

Thomas Burke

A CITY VOICE

Outside here in the city the burning pavements lie,
There's heat and grime and blown black dust to help the day go by,
There's the groaning of the city like a goaded, beaten beast; —
I know a place where God's great trees go up to meet His sky,
Like an army green with banners, and a happy wind released,
Goes swinging like a merry child among the branches high.

Outside here in the city there's poison in the air —
The fevered, heavy hand o' heat that smites and may not spare;

There's little comfort in the night — there's torment in the day; —
I know a place where cool and deep the quiet lake lies bare,
All day about its shaded brink the wild birds dart and play,
And willows dip their finger-tips like dainty ladies there.

O, the heart of me is hungering for my own, own place,
I'm tortured with the slaying heat, the dizzy headlong race,
O, for the soft, cold touch of grass about my tired feet,
The breath of pine and cedar blown against my weary face;
The lip-lay of the water like a little song and sweet,
And God's green trees and God's blue skies above me for a space.

Theodosia Garrison

FIFTEEN[1]

(*To a Face on Fifth Avenue*)

How close must be the city air
To make your young head droop so soon,
Ere ever May's wild-flying hair
Yield to the silken bonds of June!

[1] From *Poems and Ballads*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Faded! Before the bloom, the blight!
Unshamed, but faded! Where are now
Those tremulous glories that made bright
That powdered cheek and brow?

Oh, cheek that flamed, oh, sparkling eyes!
Was it for this, that perfect mirth?
For this the love, the sacrifice,
The patience, and the pangs of birth?

Faded! And now the long decay;
Years, and the hungering look behind.
November on the heels of May!
A crumpled leaf, the whirling wind!

Hermann Hagedorn

IN THE TUBE

A TIRED, working woman, draggle-tailed,
Came in, harsh-featured in the yellow glare
Of electricity; an urchin trailed
Clumsily after her, with towsled hair,
And sharp, pale features, and a vacant stare,
And in her arms she bore another child.

A sick child, doubtless, where all three looked sick;
The poor legs hanging limply, lean and blue,
Dangled grotesquely, for the boots, too thick
For such frail bones a touch could snap in two,
Like clock-weights seemed to swing, as staggered through
The burdened mother, till she found a seat.

Through dark unnatural to unnatural blaze
Of stations rocked the train; it tore the air
To shreds and tatters in the tunnelled ways
With such a noise as when hell's trumpets blare;
We, swaying, faced our fellow-creatures there
Each mercilessly pilloried in light.

The sick child lay against the woman's breast
Asleep, and she looked down on it and smiled,
And with her gaunt arms made her bird a nest
Against her poor worn bosom — sad and mild
In such wise looked Madonna at her Child
Where old saints worshipped, round the altar set.

Such glory of the spirit shone and streamed
In that brief moment, that her form and face
Were rags of vesture only, through which gleamed
The splendor; something of wonder and of grace
Making the poor flesh lovely — all the place
Grew holy with the Mother and the Child.

John Presland

IN THE SUBWAY

Her knotted hand, in cotton glove,
That clutched the swaying strap above,
Made idle eyes come roaming back
To her thin form in meagre black,
And question what her face might tell.
I saw her face. It wove a spell —
A waste of lean, unvaried years,
A parchéd plain unwet with tears,

An endless vista, monochrome,
Of home and work and work and home.
That last word mocks the fancied place
In which I framed her vacant face;
A room whose door and window close
On all who might be friends or foes;
Whence, mornings, she makes early start,
With tightly-buttoned coat and heart.

Malleville Haller

THE CITY

HAUNTED

By furtive fear of Heaven's wrath
For wallowing in the mire,
Each day,
With a coward's mockery of courage,
The city hurls a monumental oath
Of brick and mortar
Far up into the air.

These are the sky-tipped towers
Of terrifying height
Rising from the swamp-black wilderness
of greed —
A frothy challenge to the gods
From snarling lips.

Max Endicoff

WINDOW-WISHIN'

Oh yes, we get off regular
By half past six,
And six on Saturdays.
Sister an' I go marketing on Saturday nights,
Everything's down.
Besides there's Sunday comin';
You can sleep,
Oh my, how you can sleep!
No mother shakin' you
To "get up now,"
No coffee smell
Hurryin' you while you dress,
No Beauty Shop to get to on the tick of the minute
Or pony up a fine.
Sister an' I go window-wishin'
Sunday afternoon, all over the Loop.
It's lots of fun.
First she'll choose what she thinks is the prettiest,
Then my turn comes.
You mustn't ever choose a thing
The other's lookin' at,
And when a window's done
The one that beats
Can choose the first time when we start the next.
The hats are hardest,
'Specially when they're turnin' round and round.
But window-wishin's great!

Then there's the pictures,
Bully ones sometimes,
Sometimes they're queer.
Sister an' I go in 'most every Sunday.
We took Mother 'long last week,
But she didn't like 'em any too well.
Mother's old, you know,
We have to kinda humor her.
Next day she couldn't remember a single thing
But the lions on the steps.

You know what happened the other night?
Sister and I didn't know just what to do, —
A gentleman came to see us.
He said Jim asked him to
Sometime when he was near.
Jim's my brother, you know.
He lives down state.
We have to send him part of our wages regular,
Sister an' I,
He doesn't seem to get a steady place,
And Mother likes us to.
She's dotty on Jim.
Sometimes I get real nasty —
A great big man like that!

Anyway his friend came walkin' in
And said Jim sent his love.
Sister an' I didn't exactly know what to do,
And Mother looked so queer!
Her dress was awful dirty.

He said he was livin' in Chicago,
And Sister said she hoped
He had a place he liked.
He only stayed a little while,
Till half past eight,
And then he took his hat
From under the chair he was sittin' on
And went away.
I said just now it happened the other night,
But it was seven weeks ago last Friday evening.
He said he'd come again.
I dunno as he will,
Sister an' I keep wonderin'.
We dressed up every night for quite a while
And stayed in Sundays.
Yesterday we thought
We'd go down window-wishin',
And what do you think?
Just as she'd picked a lovely silver dress
Sister jerked my arm,
Then all of a sudden there she was
Cryin' and snifflin' in her handkerchief
Standin' there on the sidewalk,
And what do you think she said?
"I'd like to kill the woman that wears that gown!"
I tell you I was scared,
She looked so queer,
But she's all right to-day.
Oh thank you, two o'clock next Saturday the tenth?

I'll put it down,
A shampoo and a wave, you said?
I'll keep the time,
Good-morning.

Mary Aldis

THE LAMPLIGHTER

My tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky;
It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;
For every night at teatime and before you take your seat,
With lantern and with ladder he comes posting up the street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go to sea,
And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;
But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do,
O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps with you!

For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more;
And O! before you hurry by with ladder and with light,
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him to-night!

Robert Louis Stevenson

THE CITY LIGHTS FROM A SKYSCRAPER

From my high window at the fall of night,
I see the low-hung firmament of light:

Like port-holes of a ship afloat in space
Or danger signals in a hidden place;

An iridescent serpent with black jaws;
A banner tattered in a giant's cause;

A sun-touched river winding through the gloom;
Wild writing on the heavens of a doom;

Or just the cottage-candles in a wood
Where children play together and are good.

Frances Shaw

THE VAGABONDS IN THE PARK

They sit upon little benches, lips slack, eyelids blinking
Like flapping white shades in the windows of empty rooms.
The trees over them shift their lace with rustling, smothered laughs,
And speak of the nakedness to come.
But the straight, shining women under the trees
Have never known what it is to take off dust-painted clothes.

Maxwell Bodenheim

RHAPSODY ON A WINDY NIGHT

Twelve o'clock.
Along the reaches of the street
Held in a lunar synthesis,
Whispering lunar incantations
Dissolve the floors of memory
And all its clear relations,
Its divisions and precisions.
Every street lamp that I pass
Beats like a fatalistic drum,
And through the spaces of the dark
Midnight shakes the memory
As a madman shakes a dead geranium.

Half-past one,
The street lamp sputtered,
The street lamp muttered,
The street lamp said, "Regard that woman
Who hesitates toward you in the light of the door
Which opens on her like a grin.
You see the border of her dress
Is torn and stained with sand,
And you see the corner of her eye
Twists like a crooked pin."

The memory throws up high and dry
A crowd of twisted things;
A twisted branch upon the beach
Eaten smooth, and polished
As if the world gave up

The secret of its skeleton,
Stiff and white.
A broken spring in a factory yard,
Rust that clings to the form that the strength has left
Hard and cruel and ready to snap.

Half-past two,
The street lamp said,
"Remark the cat which flattens itself in the gutter,
Slips out its tongue
And devours a morsel of rancid butter."
So the hand of the child, automatic,
Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was running along the quay.
I could see nothing behind that child's eye.
I have seen eyes in the street
Trying to peer through lighted shutters,
And a crab one afternoon in a pool,
An old crab with barnacles on his back,
Gripped the end of a stick which I held him.

Half-past three,
The lamp sputtered,
The lamp muttered in the dark.

The lamp hummed:
"Regard the moon,
La lune ne garde aucune rancune,
She winks a feeble eye,
She smiles into corners.

She smooths the hair of the grass.
The moon has lost her memory.
A washed-out smallpox cracks her face,
Her hand twists a paper rose,
That smells of dust and old Cologne.
She is alone
With all the old nocturnal smells
That cross and cross across her brain.
The reminiscence comes
Of sunless dry geraniums
And dust in crevices,
Smells of chestnuts in the streets,
And female smells in shuttered rooms,
And cigarettes in corridors
And cocktail smells in bars."

The lamp said,
"Four o'clock,
Here is the number on the door.
Memory!
You have the key,
The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair,
Mount.
The bed is open; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall,
Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life."

The last twist of the knife.

T. S. Eliot

THE STEAM SHOVEL

Beneath my window in a city street
A monster lairs, a creature huge and grim
And only half believed: the strength of him —
Steel-strung and fit to meet
The strength of earth —
Is mighty as men's dreams that conquer force.
Steam belches from him. He is the new birth
Of old Behemoth, late-sprung from the source
Whence Grendel sprang, and all the monster clan
Dead for an age, now born again of man.

The iron head,
Set on a monstrous, jointed neck,
Glides here and there, lifts, settles on the red
Moist floor, with nose dropped in the dirt, at beck
Of some incredible control.
He snorts, and pauses couchant for a space,
Then slowly lifts, and tears the gaping hole
Yet deeper in earth's flank. A sudden race
Of loosened earth and pebbles trickles there
Like blood-drops in a wound.
But he, the monster, swings his load around —
Weightless it seems as air.
His mammoth jaw
Drops widely open with a rasping sound,
And all the red earth vomits from his maw.

O thwarted monster, born at man's decree,
A lap-dog dragon, eating from his hand

And doomed to fetch and carry at command,
Have you no longing ever to be free?
In warm, electric days to run a-muck,
Ranging like some mad dinosaur,
Your fiery heart at war
With this strange world, the city's restless ruck,
Where all drab things that toil, save you alone,
Have life;
And you the semblance only, and the strife?
Do you not yearn to rip the roots of stone
Of these great piles men build,
And hurl them down with shriek of shattered steel,
Scorning your own sure doom, so you may feel,
You too, the lust with which your fathers killed?
Or is your soul in very deed so tame,
The blood of Grendel watered to a gruel,
That you are well content
With heart of flame
Thus placidly to chew your cud of fuel
And toil in peace for man's aggrandizement?

Poor helpless creature of a half-grown god,
Blind of yourself and impotent!
At night,
When your forerunners, sprung from quicker sod,
Would range through primal woods, hot on the
scent,
Or wake the stars with amorous delight,
You stand, a soiled, unwieldy mass of steel,
Black in the arc-light, modern as your name,
Dead and unsouled and trite;

Till I must feel
A quick creator's pity for your shame:
That man, who made you and who gave so much,
Yet cannot give the last transforming touch;
That with the work he cannot give the wage —
For day, no joy of night,
For toil, no ecstasy of primal rage.

Eunice Tietjens

THE PEOPLE IN THE PARK

These are the city's poets,
These people in the park,
Who sit and watch slow shadows
Melt into the dark;

Who come on Maytime evenings
Or on rich nights of June,
And see above the treetops
The bubble of the moon;

Who listen to the fountain
That tinkles all day long,
And let its echo lodge with them,
An anthem and a song.

Young lovers loiter gladly
In many a leafy place,
And look with the old wonder
Into each other's face.

These are the happy poets
Whom nothing can dismay,
Who keep wise dreams within their hearts
That none can take away.

Charles Hanson Towne

IN NEW YORK

He plays the deuce with my writing time,
For the penny my sixth-floor neighbor throws;
He finds me proud of my pondered rhyme,
And he leaves me — well, God knows
It takes the shine from a tunester's line
When a little mate of the deathless Nine
Pipes up under your nose!

For listen, there is his voice again,
Wistful and clear and piercing sweet.
Where did the boy find such a strain
To make a dead heart beat?
And how in the name of care can he bear
To jet such a fountain into the air
In this grey gulch of a street?

Tuscan slopes or the Piedmontese?
Umbria under the Apennine?
South, where the terraced lemon-trees
Round rich Sorrento shine?
Venice moon on the smooth lagoon? —
Where have I heard that aching tune,
That boyish throat divine?

Beyond my roofs and chimney pots
A rag of sunset crumbles grey;
Below, fierce radiance hangs in clots
O'er the streams that never stay.
Shrill and high, newsboys cry
The worst of the city's infamy
For one more sordid day.

But my desire has taken sail
For lands beyond, soft-horizoned:
Down languorous leagues I hold the trail,
From Marmalada, steeply throned
Above high pastures washed with light,
Where dolomite by dolomite
Looms sheer and spectral-coned.

To purple vineyards looking south
On reaches of the still Tyrrhene;
Virgilian headlands, and the mouth
Of Tiber, where that ship put in
To take the dead man home to God,
Whereof Casella told the mode
To the great Florentine.

Up stairways blue with flowering weed
I climb to hill-hung Bergamo;
All day I watch the thunder breed
Golden above the springs of Po,
Till the voice makes sure its wavering lure,
And by Assisi's portals pure
I stand, with heart bent low.

O hear, how it booms in the blear dayfall,
That flower of passionate wistful song!
How it blows like a rose by the iron wall
Of the city loud and strong.
How it cries, "Nay, nay," to the worldling's way,
To the heart's clear dream how it whispers, "Yea;
Time comes, though time is long."

Beyond my roofs and chimney piles
Sunset crumbles, ragged, dire;
The roaring street is hung for miles
With fierce electric fire.
Shrill and high, newsboys cry
The gross of the planet's destiny
Through one more sullen gyre.

Stolidly the town flings down
Its lust by day for its nightly lust;
Who does his given stint, 'tis known,
Shall have his mug and crust. —
Too base of mood, too harsh of blood,
Too stout to seize the grosser good,
Too hungry after dust!

O hark! how it booms in the falling dark,
That flower of mystical yearning song;
Sad as a hermit thrush, as a lark
Uplifted, glad, and strong.
Heart, we have chosen the better part!
Save sacred love and sacred art
Nothing is good for long.

William Vaughn Moody

MANNAHATTA

I was asking for something specific and perfect for my city,
Whereupon lo! upsprang the aboriginal name.

Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane, unruly, musical, self-evident,
I see that the word of my city is that word from of old,
Because I see that word nested in nests of water-bays, superb,
Rich, hemm'd thick all around with sailships and steamships, an island sixteen miles long, solid-founded,
Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender, strong, light, splendidly uprising toward clear skies,
Tides swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown,
The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger adjoining islands, the heights, the villas,
The countless masts, the white shore-steamers, the lighters, the ferry-boats, the black sea-steamers well model'd,
The down-town streets, the jobbers' houses of business, the houses of business of the ship-merchants and money-brokers, the river-streets,
Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand in a week,

The carts hauling goods, the manly race of drivers of horses, the brown-faced sailors,
The summer air, the bright sun shining, and the sailing clouds aloft,
The winter snows, the sleigh-bells, the broken ice in the river, passing along up or down with the flood-tide or ebb-tide,
The mechanics of the city, the masters, well-form'd, beautiful-faced, looking you straight in the eyes,
Trottoirs throng'd, vehicles, Broadway, the women, the shops and shows,
A million people — manners free and superb — open voices — hospitality — the most courageous and friendly young men,
City of hurried and sparkling waters! city of spires and masts!
City nested in bays! my city!

Walt Whitman

THE CITY

Gay is the city —
My joy is gone;
Man-crowded alleys —
Why am I lone?

Iron and marble —
I miss the sod;
Cloisters, cathedrals —
Where is my God?

Flower-complexions —
City-wrought art.
Bosoms are heaving —
Where is a heart?

Falsehood unfettered,
Truth under ban,
Man-heaps and brick-heaps —
Lost is the man.

Beautiless virtue —
Passionless sin —
Light on the surface —
Darkness within.

Word is convention —
Smile is but frown —
Heaven the field made —
Who made the town?

Philip M. Raskin

THE STREET OF LITTLE SHOPS

The Avenue is lined with glass
And walls with climbing tops —
But just around the corner lies
The Street of Little Shops.

Hernando with his baker-cart,
Luigi with his fruits,
And blind old Thomas turning soles,
And Michael blacking boots;

And Pedro heaping popcorn up
In little, fragrant piles,
And Cho San selling daffodils,
And violets — and smiles.

The Avenue is straight and fine —
But when my journey stops
I hope to find a corner in
The Street of Little Shops.

Helen Frazee-Bower

NOVEMBER BLUE

O HEAVENLY color, London town
Has blurred it from her skies;
And, hooded in an earthly brown,
Unheaven'd the city lies.
No longer standard-like this hue
Above the broad road flies;
Nor does the narrow street the blue
Wear, slender pennon-wise.

But when the gold and silver lamps
Color the London dew,
And, misted by the winter damps,
The shops shine bright anew —
Blue comes to earth, it walks the street,
It dyes the wide air through;
A mimic sky about their feet,
The throng go crowned with blue.

Alice Meynell

APRIL IN "THE STREET"

April of the shining tresses,
Tearful month, and laughing eyes!
Where the budding wildernesses
Wait the swallow's glad surprise,
Where the slender
Larch's tender
Green is new and neat,
Most folks set you;
Yet I've met you
In Throgmorton Street!

When the City pigeon's cooing
Takes a soft domestic note,
When the daffodil is doing
Duty in the broker's coat,
When through highway,
Court and byway,
Gusts and sunshine range,
And the racing
Clouds are chasing
Over the Exchange;

What if rates be flat or firmer,
What if prices fill or back,
If I hear your sunny murmur
Of a four days' Easter slack,
Of absconding,
Vagabonding

From the Street's grim aisle,
While its chill stones,
Mammon's millstones,
Cease to grind awhile!

Patrick R. Chalmers

LONDON

THERE is no town but London town.
I go wandering up and down,
Round and round and round about,
Back and forth, and in and out,
From light to shade, from shade to light,
In the dawn, and through the night,
When sleep scours all her streets of men,
And morning pours them back agen,
I go wandering like a shade,
The loneliest creature God has made,
And yet akin with all the earth,
And all that flesh has brought to birth,
And all I touch and all I see,
Oh, I am that, and that is me!
I love the tramp of human feet,
To feel the world's great pulses beat;
I love the triumphant roar of strife,
The clashing armaments of life;
I do not hate the smoke and grime,
The dusky kiss of labouring Time,
For smoke and grime make London grey,
And London white, and London gay,

Would seem to me a painted whore,
And not my London any more.
Oh, when the fog falls like a shroud
And smothers up the human crowd,
And I can only sense and smell
The living things I love so well,
And Death lurks slyly within reach,
And springs to warn men with a screech
And a dull gleam of lampish eyes
That life is short and all flesh dies;
Then mystery walks at my right hand,
And leads me to a mystic land —
A land of wan and muffled sound,
A land of undiscovered ground,
Where I must walk with silent lips
Beside a river whose dim ships,
Ghost cargoed and faint jewelled, glide
With and against an unseen tide;
And yellow wasps be-star the air,
And angels stand with wild bright hair,
And men walk nearer to God's throne
Because they find themselves alone.
And when the rain comes silvering down,
Oh, then I love this London town!
When Day has closed her drowsed lids up,
And Night shades life like some dark cup
Whose wine is spilt in golden dreams,
Then are the streets like shining streams,
And I in my battleship of fire
Hiss my mad way, my heart a lyre;
With delving feet and soaring wings
I am quick to the searching touch of things,

The ruddy arms of men, that gleam
Out of the darkness like a dream
Of fateful power; the piteous moon,
A fearful spirit come too soon,
Affronted by the storm wind's breath,
Dying a mournful misty death;
The lamps, those spiders of the night,
Spinning their wavering threads of light,
Seeking all heaven and earth to span,
From man to God, and God to man;
The thunder of a passing train,
Which belches out its hideous pain
Against the howling of the wind,
Streaming its Titan hair behind;
And then the quiet suburban streets,
Where still the mighty muffled beats
Of London's heart keep time with mine,
And London's distant lamps still shine
Reflected, hovering in the skies,
A burning moth with golden eyes.
Men say I love not London town,
Because I sing of hill and down,
Because I feel the insistent goad
Which drives me out upon the road
To seek the wide eternal green
That washes mind and spirit clean,
And leave the trodden streets behind,
And leap to meet the unfettered wind,
And dance because of budding trees,
And wing my longing to grey seas!
But oh, the dust beneath my feet
Is doubly dear and doubly sweet

That I shall tread it back agen
To London streets and London men!

Irene Rutherford McLeod

THE "L" EXPRESS

Rackety-rackety-ziz-ziz-rack,
The cars of the Elevated clack along the track.
With a jerk and a whirr and a devil-may-care,
Along we go racketing, up in the air.

Garbage in the alleys bursts in dirty cans,
Backyard washing gets the dust a quick breeze fans,
Slattern women gossip on a rickety stair —
Grime and ugly living and a stale despair!

Rackety-rackety-ziz-ziz-rack,
Back and forth and back again, we clack along the track.
Why are we journeying, and where, where, where?
Hurry! hurry! hurry! We've no time to care.

Florence Kiper Frank

A FAUN IN WALL STREET

What shape so furtive steals along the dim
Bleak street, barren of throngs, this day of June;
This day of rest, when all the roses swoon
In Attic vales where dryads wait for him?
What sylvan this, and what the stranger whim

That lured him here this golden afternoon;
Ways where the dusk has fallen oversoon
In the deep canyon, torrentless and grim?

Great Pan is far, O mad estray, and these
Bare walls that leap to heaven and hide the skies
Are fanes men rear to other deities;
Far to the East the haunted woodland lies,
And cloudless still, from cyclad-dotted seas,
Hymettus and the hills of Hellas rise.

John Myers O'Hara

THE CURB-BROKERS

Hail, ye frenzied creatures, antic, mask-like figures,
Shouting gibberish symbols, wheat and corn and cotton,
Lo, the whole world is a maniac vision,
Worm-eaten by black hopes and wriggling poisonous alarms;
Neither flesh nor blood nor God nor devil,
One great brazen throat and dollar-signs for arms.
Hail, ye frenzied creatures,
'Tis a blue autumn morn!
And did ye ever walk among the rustling rows of corn?

Florence Wilkinson Evans

PICCADILLY

Above, the quiet stars and the night wind;
Below, the lamp-lit streets, and up and down
The tired, stealthy steps of those who walk
When the just sleep, at night, in London town.

Poor garish ghosts that haunt the yellow glare,
Wan spectres, lurking in the alleys dark
Among the tainted night-smells, while the wind
Is whispering to the trees across the Park;

For it is summer, may be, and the scent
Of new-mown hay is sweet across the fields,
But neither summer, nor the gleaming spring
One breath of healing to this dark life yields;

No morning sunshine greets these sidelong eyes
With blessings, daughters as they are of gloom,
Ghosts only, such as seem to have a shape
At night in some old evil, haunted room.

Would that they were indeed to be dissolved
At every sunrise! — they are living souls
Dragging mortality about foul streets
While overhead the star-lit heaven rolls.

Living souls are they, and they have their share
In seed and harvest, and the round world's boon
Of changing seasons, and the miracle
Of each month's waxing and waning of the moon.

Living souls are they, prisoned in a net
Of stealthy streets — age after age they've gone
Bearing the burden of a city's sin,
In London, and old Rome, and Babylon.

John Presland

SUNDAY EVENING

I saw a pale young clerk coming home from the country,
His tired wife beside him, his child on his knee;
In his hands a bunch of crushed lilacs and wilting dogwood —
But in his heart a joy unknown to me.

The Subway clamored and clattered; the lurching people,
Weary, after long tramps through a scented lane,
Seemed like phantoms before me and all around me,
Their faces like ghosts in gardens after light rain.

But O, they were real! They were only too human!
Their eyes held the eager fire of dreams and of youth.
And I, in my loneliness, I to them was a phantom;
They had been out in still places; they had tasted the Truth.

And now they had memories for a week of days unending;

Now they had glamour enough to carry them
through.
And only I was alone in that heaving Subway —
I, an idle dreamer, with nothing at all to do.

Charles Hanson Towne

NEW YORK

A NOCTURNE

Down-gazing, I behold,
Miraculous by night,
A city all of gold.
Here, there, and everywhere,
In myriad fashion fair,
A mystery untold
Of Light!

Not royal Babylon,
Nor Tyre, nor Rome the great —
In the all-powerful state
Her wisdom and her armèd legions won —
Was so illuminate
As the strange world which, awed, I look upon.
With it compared, the ancient glories fail,
And, in the glow it doth irradiate,
The planets of the firmament grow pale!

Night, birth-fellow to Chaos, never wore
A robe so gemmed before.
The splendor streams
In lines and jets and scintillating gleams

From tower and spire and campanile bright,
And palaces of light.

How beautiful is this
Unmatched Cosmopolis! —
City of wealth and want,
  Of pitiless extremes,
  Selfish ambitions, pure aspiring dreams;
Whose miseries, remembered, daunt
The bravest spirit hope hath cheered —
This city loved and hated, honored, feared:
This Titan City, bold to dare:
This wounded Might
That, dreading darkness, still conceals its care
And hides its gaping hurt 'neath veils of light!

Oh, I have looked on Venice when the moon
Silvered each dark lagoon,
  And have in dreams beheld her
Clothed in resplendent pride,
The Adriatic's bride!
Naples I, too, have seen —
An even lovelier Queen —
  And thought that nothing in the world
    excelled her —
Nay marvelled, as at close of day
I gazed across her opalescent bay
And saw Vesuvius burn on high
Against the soft Italian sky,
That anything on earth could wear
A charm so past compare!

Yet, O Manhattan! Glowing now
Against the sombre night,
Thine opulence and squalor hid from sight,
Never was aught more beautiful than thou
Dost in thy calm appear —
So glorified and so transfigured here —
Since the Eternal, to creation stirred,
Breathed from His awful lips the mystic word:
Let there be Light!

Florence Earle Coates

THE LITTLE CHILDHER IN THE STREET

The little childher in the street —
It's shipwrecked sure they are with cold,
There's some of them not eight years old,
And ne'er a boot upon their feet.
To beg a copper they go far
In rain and frost, in snow and sleet,
The little childher in the street,
You'd pity them the way they are.

There's other childher warmly clad,
That live in houses in the square,
They all have coppers and to spare,
The sight of them would make you glad;
A nurse, be sure, is never far
To shield them from the rain or cold.
They're guarded like a bag of gold —
You'd envy them the way they are.

Now them that look so rich and grand,
And them that shiver in the street,
I wonder will they ever meet
And walk together hand in hand.
I do be thinking when they're small
It's like they are as peas in pod;
Maybe they're like as that to God —
It's sure enough He made them all.

W. M. Letts

THE "SANDWICH" MAN

The lights of town are pallid yet
With winter afternoon;
The sullied streets are dank and wet,
The halted motors fume and fret,
The world turns homeward soon.

There is no kindle in the sky,
No cheering sunset flame;
I have no help from passers-by, —
They part, and give good-night; but I . . .
Walk with another's name.

I have no kith, nor kin, nor home
Wherein to turn to sleep;
No star-lamp sifts me through the gloam,
I am the driven, wastrel foam
On a subsiding deep.

I do not toil for love, nor fame,
Or hope of high reward;

My path too low for praise or blame,
I struggle on, each day the same,
My panoply — a board.

Who gave me life I do not know,
Nor what that life should be,
Or why I live at all; I go,
A dead leaf shivering with snow,
Under a worn-out tree.

The lights of town are blurred with mist,
And pale with afternoon, —
Of gold they are, and amethyst:
Dull pain is creeping at my wrist . . .
The world turns homeward soon.

Benjamin R. C. Low

BIRDLINGS

An out-of-town swallow culling crumbs
From urban cobble-stone —
A sophisticated sparrow pecking worms
Off a luscious landscape.

A country girl with wistful eyes
Before a shop of artificial flowers —
A city maid talking love
To a dainty dandelion.

David Sentner

IN FISHER ROW

A HARD north-easter fifty winters long
Has bronzed and shrivelled sere her face and neck;
Her locks are wild and gray, her teeth a wreck;
Her foot is vast, her bowed leg spare and strong.
A wide blue cloak, a squat and sturdy throng
Of curt blue coats, a mutch without a speck,
A white vest broidered black, her person deck,
Nor seems their picked, stern, old-world quaintness wrong.
Her great creel forehead-slung, she wanders nigh,
Easing the heavy strap with gnarled, brown fingers,
The spirit of traffic watchful in her eye,
Ever and anon imploring you to buy,
As looking down the street she onward lingers,
Reproachful, with a strange and doleful cry.

William Ernest Henley

LONDON

LONDON, my beautiful,
it is not the sunset
nor the pale green sky
shimmering through the curtain
of the silver birch,
nor the quietness;
it is not the hopping
of birds
upon the lawn,

nor the darkness
stealing over all things
that moves me.

But as the moon creeps slowly
over the tree-tops
among the stars,
I think of her
and the glow her passing
sheds on men.

London, my beautiful,
I will climb
into the branches
to the moonlit tree-tops,
that my blood may be cooled
by the wind.

F. S. Flint

SNOW AT MIDNIGHT: THE ELEVATED

Over the city,
from infinite heights,
falls soundlessly,
falls crushingly impalpable
and sleepily windless,
the soft and stealthy
inexorable snow.
It pads the world with silence
like an immense and mute precipitation
of some universal slumber.

And the jaded city lets its blear blurred lights go out
one by one.

A snaky far-off purring roar that grows
and grows
and grows —
a hissing smash and deafening gallopy clatter of ten
thousand frantic hoofs —
the dragon train,
a wild unwinking eye of red,
a wild unwinking eye of green,
its belly full of blinding light
that blares through eaten holes in its rattling hide,
shoots
in a shrieking paroxysm of speed,
between the house-tops,
over its tense humming spider-web of steel.
And out of its clenched jaws
drips, with slithering screams,
tassels and sizzling fringes of a foam of fire.
It claws a rain of green and purple stars
out of the moaning rails,
and the houses gasp in livid fits,
convulse in spasms of terror and reelingly
dash themselves on one another
with gaping mouths and dazzled maniac eyes.

Flickering,
gesticulating,
they stagger backward from the dragon train
and close behind it like twin tidal waves

clashing —
red toppling monstrous rigid waves
with curling licking crests
of swirled whirled snow.

The snow is falling very soft and white,
falling from infinite heights
windless and thick;
the city smothers in its frozen dreams.
And the houses with enormous wigs of snow
stand stiffened and featureless
as huge unburied coffins
upright, row on inert silent row,
in a vast deserted graveyard.

Only, receding far off,
the dragon train
howls
faintly and yet more faint
and lonely as a wolf.
And its knife-like fringe of stars
falls
sputtering through the dense and unresisting
unconquerable and soft
down-sifting infinite
snow.

Frederick Mortimer Clapp

RED SLIPPERS

Red slippers in a shop-window, and outside in the street, flaws of grey, windy sleet!

Behind the polished glass, the slippers hang in long threads of red, festooning from the ceiling like stalactites of blood, flooding the eyes of passers-by with dripping colour, jamming their crimson reflections against the windows of cabs and tram-cars, screaming their claret and salmon into the teeth of the sleet, plopping their little round maroon lights upon the tops of umbrellas.

The row of white, sparkling shop fronts is gashed and bleeding, it bleeds red slippers. They spout under the electric light, fluid and fluctuating, a hot rain — and freeze again to red slippers, myriadly multiplied in the mirror side of the window.

They balance upon arched insteps like springing bridges of crimson lacquer; they swing up over curved heels like whirling tanagers sucked in a wind-pocket; they flatten out, heelless, like July ponds, flared and burnished by red rockets.

Snap, snap, they are cracker-sparks of scarlet in the white, monotonous block of shops.

They plunge the clangour of billions of vermillion trumpets into the crowd outside, and echo in faint rose over the pavement.

People hurry by, for these are only shoes, and in a window, further down, is a big lotus bud of cardboard whose petals open every few minutes and reveal a wax doll, with staring bead eyes and flaxen hair, lolling awkwardly in its flower chair.

One has often seen shoes, but who ever saw a cardboard lotus bud before?

The flaws of grey, windy sleet beat on the shop-window where there are only red slippers.

Amy Lowell

BOND STREET

Lavender fresh are your looks
Bond Street, in May-time;
London that's laid down her books,
London in playtime;
Sunlit eleven o'clock,
Jack, ay, and Jill,
Furbelow, feather and frock,
Fashion and frill!

Lilac'd and lawned go your girls,
So many Graces,
Soft as the dawn, or the pearls
Caught in their laces;
Lo, it was Celia laughed
Silver afar;
Here breathed a violet waft,
There a cigar!

Men who are fêted and fed,
Folk who've come croppers,
Men who fill lions with lead,
Surbiton shoppers;
Thus does the whirligig go
Blithe as a bell;
Soothly it seems that your show
Runs rather well.

Yet on this Monday you've more —
How shall I term it? —
Éclat than ever before,
Yes, I affirm it;
Why so, I hardly can say,
Saving 'tis that
Dolly is up for the day,
Getting a hat!

Patrick R. Chalmers

IN LONDON ON SATURDAY NIGHT

Is it not pleasant to wander
In town on Saturday night,
While people go hither or thither,
And shops shed cheerful light?
And, arm in arm, while our shadows
Chase us along the panes,
Are we not quite as cosy
As down among country lanes?

Nobody knows us, heeds us,
Nobody hears or sees,
And the shop-lights gleam more gladly
Than the moon on hedges and trees;
And people coming and going,
All upon ends of their own,
Though they work a spell on the spirit,
Move it more finely alone.

The sound seems harmless and pleasant
As the murmur of brook and wind;

The shops with the fruit and pictures
  Have sweetness to suit my mind;
And nobody knows us, heeds us,
  And our loving none reproves, —
I, the poor figure-painter!
  You, the lady he loves!

And what if the world should scorn you,
  For now and again, as you do,
Assuming a country kirtle,
  And bonnet of straw thereto,
Or the robe of a vestal virgin,
  Or a nun's grey gabardine,
And keeping a brother and sister
  By standing and looking divine?

And what if the world, moreover,
  Should silently pass me by,
Because, at the dawn of the struggle
  I labor some stories high!
Why, there's comfort in waiting, working,
  And feeling one's heart beat right, —
And rambling alone, love-making,
  In London on Saturday night.

Robert Buchanan

LONDON SNOW

When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,

Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:
Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.
All night it fell, and when full inches seven
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;
And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare:
The eye marvelled — marvelled at the dazzling whiteness;
The ear harkened to the stillness of the solemn air;
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.
Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,
They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze
Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snowballing;
Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;
Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,
'O look at the trees!' they cried, 'O look at the trees!'
With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,
Following along the white deserted way,

A country company long dispersed asunder:
When now already the sun, in pale display
Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth below
His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.
For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;
And trains of sombre men, past tale of number,
Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they go:
But even for them awhile no cares encumber
Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken,
The daily thoughts of labor and sorrow slumber
At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the charm they have broken.

Robert Bridges

ON BLEECKER STREET

Dirty little smudged face, and bare and battered feet,
Playing in the sunshine, laughing at the heat,
Light of heart and care-free, down on Bleecker Street.

Wonder what you think, boy, wonder do you dream —
Summer in the country, and field, and wood, and stream,
Wind among the roses, and stars that glow and gleam?

Wonder if the message that makes the summer dear,
Song that thrills my heart-strings murmurs in your ear;
If it came a-wooing, I wonder would you hear?

If it came a-wooing, — Ah, God is kind and wise,
Would not wake the hunger in a baby's eyes,
Till that heart could answer the call of paradise.

So you play, and happy, I wonder does she know —
She who is your mother and loves you, baby, so —
Ache for that you share not the gifts that God would show?

Edmund Leamy

THE SHOPS

Factories are crude and ugly places
Even at best, and most of them are filled
With belts and shafts, machinery that races,
And men with heavy hands and grimy faces,
And noise, noise, noise! — noise that is ever spilled
Upon the air like molten, white-hot steel
So fierce it is; noise that is ground and shrilled,
Pounded and shrieked and hummed,
Clattered and drummed —
Noise of the furnace and the hammer, squeal
Of monster planers, crunch of giant shears,
Rumble of rollers thudding on the ears
With most intolerable clamor, yet these places

Are where dreams are built.
— Through far-flung spaces
The long trains thunder; over vasty seas
The ships move on superbly; towers rise
Graceful and strong against the arching skies
Of roaring cities, — miracles like these
— All the huge wonders of this plangent time —
Are born of ugly shops bedimmed with grime.

Berton Braley

THE CITY LIGHTS

The stars of heaven are paler than the lights
That gleam beside them sixteen stories high;
Outlined against the blackness of the sky
Tall buildings glimmer through the frosty nights.

The stars of heaven in stately silence move
Beyond the circle of the window-gleams.
But dazzled by the fitful lower beams,
I think not of the light that shines above.

But when I speed upon the outbound train,
The lights of earth mist-hidden fade away;
And quietly the stars resume their sway,
And shine in peace above the world again.

Anna Louise Strong

A RHYME ABOUT AN ELECTRICAL ADVERTISING SIGN [1]

I LOOK on the specious electrical light
Blatant, mechanical, crawling and white,
Wickedly red or malignantly green
Like the beads of a young Senegambian queen.
Showing, while millions of souls hurry on,
The virtues of collars, from sunset till dawn,
By dart or by tumble of whirl within whirl,
Starting new fads for the shame-weary girl,
By maggoty motions in sickening line
Proclaiming a hat or a soup or a wine,
While there far above the steep cliffs of the street
The stars sing a message elusive and sweet.

Now man cannot rest in his pleasure and toil
His clumsy contraptions of coil upon coil
Till the thing he invents, in its use and its range,
Leads on to the marvellous CHANGE BEYOND CHANGE.
Some day this old Broadway shall climb to the skies,
As a ribbon of cloud on a soul-wind shall rise,
And we shall be lifted, rejoicing by night,
Till we join with the planets who choir their delight.
The signs in the streets and the signs in the skies
Shall make a new Zodiac, guiding the wise,
And Broadway make one with that marvellous stair
That is climbed by the rainbow-clad spirits of prayer.

Vachel Lindsay

[1] From *The Congo and Other Poems*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

UNION SQUARE

I WATCH the water lilies in this pond,
The white, the blue — the yellow and the red,
The sparrow tripping on their pads beyond,
And splashing dewdrops on his wings and head.

The lotus, like a Cleopatra there,
Reveals a bosom with a roseate glow,
As in her gorgeous old Egyptian lair
She fascinated heroes long ago.

Adown the walk a throng of children goes
With dewy eyes a-peep through hazy curls,
When years are poems, every month a rose,
All morns are rubies and all noons are pearls.

Around these seats I see a motley crowd
Of listless loungers, miserable and low,
With backs bent double, wrinkled faces bowed,
Or, aimless, straggling by with footsteps slow.

With corncob pipes, these old men mumbling sit,
Forsaken, friendless, waiting but for death,
When, like the dead leaves that around them flit,
They fall to be forgotten in a breath.

And here a hard-faced girl reclines alone,
Dreaming of dead days with their holy calm,
Before her happy heart was turned to stone,
And slumber to her spirit brought no balm.

Here the young poet, once a farmer boy,
Who with glad heart unto the city came,
Sees manhood years his high-born hopes destroy,
And slay his dreams of fortune and of fame.

When night descends, electric argent lamps,
Like radiant cactus blossoms, blaze on high;
The city seems a world of warlike camps,
While Broadway with his legions thunders by.

In gilt play-houses hundreds sigh to see
The mimic woes of actors on the stage,
But not one tear for actual grief shall be,
The snares for childhood or the pangs of age.

Around this Square rich men and women ride,
Bedizened creatures in their fashion flaunt,
While this starved outcast, planning suicide,
Steals back to perish in his dismal haunt.

Strange, while is known so well the sparrow's fall,
Man heeds not when his brother's plaint is made;
Strange, that the brightest, whitest light of all
Should cast the deepest and the darkest shade!

But still the world denies its helping hand
To those most worthy of its love and care.
If Christ returned to-night, He too would stand
Homeless and friendless, here in Union Square.

Walter Malone

THE CHILDREN

In the Spring on the pavements of the city
The little children play marbles and laugh and shout;
Their laughter is drowned by the city all about;
But they laugh back regardless of the city
And clap their hands and shout.

In the sunlight fading from the alleys,
The braided hair, and the short hair are bowed
Over a few soiled marbles; a watching crowd
Circles them in the noisy, dusty alleys,
Where the close heads are bowed.

From the river in the distance flowing
The whistles murmur, — the tired souls of men
Call to each other over the waters again,
Over the river in the sunlight flowing
Answer the souls of men.

When lamps in the street-ways glimmer,
Along the rooves the sky still burns with day, —
A little group watches them where they play.
And in the distance the long waters glimmer
With the receding day.

John Hall Wheelock

THE PARK

All day the children play along the walks,
A robin sings in a brave, green tree,

The city lifts gray temples at its marge,
But still it keeps the heart of Arcady.

Still blows a flower in the waving grass,
Lifting a face of beauty to the sun;
Still bursts the bough in joyous burgeoning —
Still comes a lover when the day is done.

Here the white moon, with magic in her train,
Stoops from the starry lanes of paradise,
And, with her ancient witchery of dreams,
Lays some new hope upon a poet's eyes.

See, on that bench beneath the drooping bough,
Did not yon grief-bowed figure lift its face?
Look how the moonlight finds him through the leaves,
Touching his brow with sudden crowns of grace!

O little park, O little land of hope,
Snatched from the world and held for God and me,
Still through thy walks the wistful cities go,
Searching the dream that yet might set them free!

Dana Burnet

A CITY STREET

I LOVE the fields, the woods, the streams,
The wild flowers fresh and sweet,
And yet I love no less than these,
The crowded city street;

For haunts of man, where'er they be,
Awake my deepest sympathy.

I see within the city street,
  Life's most extreme estates,
The gorgeous domes of palaces,
  The prison's doleful gates:
The hearths by household virtues blest,
The dens that are the serpent's nest.

I see the rich man, proudly fed
  And richly clothed, pass by;
I see the shivering, homeless wretch,
  With hunger in his eye;
For life's severest contrasts meet
For ever in the city street.

And lofty, princely palaces —
  What dreary deeds of wo,
What untold, mortal agonies
  Their arras chambers know!
Yet is without all smooth and fair
As Heaven's blue dome of summer air.

And even the portliest citizen,
  Within his doors doth hide
Some household grief, some secret care,
  From all the world beside;
It ever was, it must be so,
For human heritage is wo!

Hence is it that a city street
Can deepest thought impart,
For all its people, high and low,
Are kindred to my heart;
And with a yearning love I share
In all their joy, their pain, their care.

Mary Howitt

SPRING IN TOWN

The country ever has a lagging Spring,
Waiting for May to call its violets forth,
And June its roses — showers and sunshine bring,
Slowly, the deepening verdure o'er the earth;
To put their foliage out, the woods are slack,
And one by one the singing-birds come back.

Within the city's bounds the time of flowers
Comes earlier. Let a mild and sunny day,
Such as full often, for a few bright hours,
Breathes through the sky of March the airs of May,
Shine on our roofs and chase the wintry gloom —
And lo! our borders glow with sudden bloom.

For the wide sidewalks of Broadway are then
Gorgeous as are a rivulet's banks in June,
That overhung with blossoms, through its glen,
Slides soft away beneath the sunny noon,
And they who search the untrodden wood for flowers
Meet in its depths no lovelier ones than ours.

For here are eyes that shame the violet,
  Or the dark drop that on the pansy lies,
And foreheads, white, as when in clusters set,
  The anemones by forest-mountains rise;
And the spring-beauty boasts no tenderer streak
Than the soft red on many a youthful cheek.

. . . . . .

Soft voices and light laughter wake the street,
  Like notes of woodbirds, and where'er the eye
Threads the long way, plumes wave, and twinkling
    feet
  Fall light, as hastes that crowd of beauty by.
The ostrich, hurrying o'er the desert space,
Scarce bore those tossing plumes with fleeter pace.

. . . . . .

Ye that dash by in chariots! who will care
  For steeds or footmen now? ye cannot show
Fair face, and dazzling dress, and graceful air,
  And last edition of the shape! Ah, no,
These sights are for the earth and open sky,
And your loud wheels unheeded rattle by.

William Cullen Bryant

IN TRINITY CHURCHYARD AT SUNSET

How still they sleep within the city moil
  In their old churchyard with its sighing trees,
  Where sometimes through the din a twilight
    breeze
Makes one forget the busy streets of toil;
But they have little thought of worldly spoil

Or the great gain of mortal victories,
Their hopes, their dreams, are cold and dead as these
Quaint, time-worn gravestones crumbling on the soil.

Yet they once lived and struggled years ago;
Their hearts beat madly as these hearts of ours —
And now is all undone in dreamless rest?
See, a great city stands against the glow —
Their city, they who here beneath the flowers
Have known so long God's gift of peace, most blest!

Thomas S. Jones, Jr.

THE MOVIES

She knows a cheap release
From worry and from pain —
The cowboys spur their horses
Over the unending plain.

The tenement rooms are small;
Their walls press on the brain.
Oh, the dip of the galloping horses
On the limitless, wind-swept plain!

Florence Kiper Frank

THE CONTRAST

In London I never know what I'd be at,
Enraptured with this, and enchanted with that;

I'm wild with the sweets of variety's plan,
And life seems a blessing too happy for man.

But the country, Lord help me! sets all matters
right,
So calm and composing from morning to night;
Oh! it settles the spirits when nothing is seen
But an ass on a common, a goose on a green.

In town if it rain, why it damps not our hope,
The eye has her choice, and the fancy her scope;
What harm though it pour whole nights and whole
days?
It spoils not our prospects, or stops not our ways.

In the country what bliss, when it rains in the fields,
To live on the transports that shuttlecock yields;
Or go crawling from window to window, to see
A pig on a dunghill or crow on a tree.

In London, if folks ill together are put,
A bore may be dropped, and a quiz may be cut;
We change without end; and if lazy or ill,
All wants are at hand, and all wishes at will.

In the country you're nailed, like a pale in the park,
To some *stick* of a neighbor that's crammed in the
ark;
And 'tis odd, if you're hurt, or in fits tumble down,
You reach death ere the doctor can reach you from
town.

In London how easy we visit and meet,
Gay pleasure's the theme, and sweet smiles are our treat:
Our morning's a round of good-humored delight,
And we rattle, in comfort, to pleasure at night.

In the country, how sprightly! our visits we make
Through ten miles of mud, for Formality's sake;
With the coachman in drink, and the moon in a fog,
And no thought in our head but a ditch or a bog.

In London the spirits are cheerful and light,
All places are gay and all faces are bright;
We've ever new joys, and revived by each whim,
Each day on a fresh tide of pleasure we swim.

But how gay in the country! what summer delight
To be waiting for winter from morning to night!
Then the fret of impatience gives exquisite glee
To relish the sweet rural subjects we see.

In town we've no use for the skies overhead,
For when the sun rises then go we to bed;
And as to that old-fashioned virgin the moon,
She shines out of season, like satin in June.

In the country these planets delightfully glare
Just to show us the object we want isn't there;
O, how cheering and gay, when their beauties arise,
To sit and gaze round with the tears in one's eyes!

But 'tis in the country alone we can find
That happy resource, that relief to the mind,
When, drove to despair, our last efforts we make,
And drag the old fish-pond, for novelty's sake:

Indeed I must own, 'tis a pleasure complete
To see ladies well draggled and wet in their feet;
But what is all that to the transport we feel
When we capture, in triumph, two toads and an eel?

I have heard, though, that love in a cottage is sweet,
When two hearts in one link of soft sympathy meet:
That's to come — for as yet I, alas! am a swain
Who require, I own it, more links to my chain.

Your magpies and stock-doves may flirt among
trees,
And chatter their transports in groves, if they
please:
But a house is much more to my taste than a tree,
And for groves, O! a good grove of chimneys for
me.

In the country, if Cupid should find a man out,
The poor tortured victim mopes hopeless about;
But in London, thank Heaven! our peace is secure,
Where for one eye to kill, there's a thousand to cure.

I know love's a devil, too subtle to spy,
That shoots through the soul, from the beam of an
eye;

But in London these devils so quick fly about,
That a new devil still drives an old devil out.

In town let me live then, in town let me die,
For in truth I can't relish the country, not I.
If one must have a villa in summer to dwell,
O, give me the sweet shady side of Pall Mall.

Charles Morris

SUNDAY EVENING IN THE COMMON

Look — on the topmost branches of the world
The blossoms of the myriad stars are thick;
Over the huddled rows of stone and brick
A few sad wisps of empty smoke are curled
Like ghosts, languid and sick.

One breathless moment now the city's moaning
Fades, and the endless streets seem vague and dim;
There is no sound around the world's rim,
Save in the distance a small band is droning
Some desolate old hymn.

Van Wyck, how often have we been together
When this same moment made all mysteries clear —
The infinite stars that brood above us here,
And the gray city in the soft June weather,
So tawdry and so dear!

John Hall Wheelock

EAST LONDON

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
"Ill and over-worked, how fare you in this scene?"—
"Bravely!" said he; "for I of late have been
Much cheered with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread*."

O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,

To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam —
Not lost, with toil thou laborest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

Matthew Arnold

THE CITY DEAD-HOUSE

By the city dead-house by the gate,
As idly sauntering wending my way from the clangor,
I curious pause, for lo, an outcast form, a poor dead prostitute brought,

Her corpse they deposit unclaim'd, it lies on the
damp brick pavement,
The divine woman, her body, I see the body, I look
on it alone,
That house once full of passion and beauty, all else
I notice not,
Nor stillness so cold, nor running water from fau-
cets, nor odors morbific impress me,
But the house alone — that wondrous house —
that delicate fair house — that ruin!
That immortal house more than all the rows of
dwellings ever built!
Or white-domed capitol with majestic figure sur-
mounted, or all the old high-spired cathe-
drals,
That little house alone more than them all — poor,
desolate house!
Fair, fearful wreck — tenement of a soul — itself a
soul,
Unclaim'd, avoided house — take one breath from
my tremulous lips,
Take a tear dropt aside as I go for thought of you
Dead house of love — house of madness and sin,
crumbled, crush'd,
House of life, erewhile talking and laughing — but
ah, poor house, dead even then,
Months, years, an echoing, garnish'd house — but
dead, dead, dead.

Walt Whitman

NEW YORK AT SUNRISE

When with her clouds the early dawn illumes
Our doubtful streets, wistful they grow and mild;
As if a sleeping soul grew happy and smiled,
The whole dark city radiantly blooms.
Pale spires lift their hands above the glooms
Like a resurrection, delicately wild,
And flushed with slumber like a little child,
Under a mist, shines forth the innocent Tombs.
Thus have I seen it from a casement high.
As unsubstantial as a dream it grows.
Is this Manhattan, virginal and shy,
That in a cloud so rapturously glows?
Ethereal, frail, and like an opening rose,
I see my city with an enlightened eye.

Anna Hempstead Branch

STEAM

Patchwork of snowy roofs and sombre walls;
a golden dome;
an amber tower;
tracery of drifting ice in the drab-grey river;
a wavering whirlpool of swooping gulls.

And, as on the face of a mountain
full of hot springs
behind the river and over dome and tower,
from slim straight pipes and squat square chimneys,
rises a plumage of steam that flowers and fades,

snow-white, and dies from strange shape into shape—
unearthly melting peonies,
dissolving polar bears and filmy dragons,
fugitive genii, floating sleeves
of elves that lift a white arm to become
banners and cipher-scrawls and full-rigged ships
that billow down a running breeze.

And to me, as I watch it, this changeling puff-puff-
puff,
from the exhausts of hidden and unresting engines,
and from the shadows that fall
like unwound lengths of black cloth
in the shafts of slim sky-scrapers,
becomes the city's aspirations
made visible,
the fretful refuge of its defeated dreams,
the white pulse of its life-blood foaming up,
the frosted breathing of imprisoned forces,
and the frayed symbol and enigma of
faces that lean out of its windows,
and creep in millions through its million doors.

In it I see the city's ineffectual past
still faltering to
to-morrow —
a Cyclopean unsubstantial world
that streams away and slips into the invisible,
through a lattice of giant shadows where
the highest houses jut along the glint
and fading quiver of the setting sun.

Frederick Mortimer Clapp

DOWNTOWN

The sun had gone, and from the ferryboat
That like a golden worm crawls through the night,
I watch the myriad stars that round me float,
And, cityward, the honeycomb of light.

Tier after tier, they blossom in the dark,
Miraculously radiant, while I
Think of the toilers bent beneath each spark,
And breathe a little prayer for them, and sigh.

Charles Hanson Towne

A ROBIN IN WALL STREET

What whistle that among these mountains tall,
This song that slid from heaven unaware
Into the cañon of this lightless hall
A flying music to the thoroughfare?
What broke that bell against the craggy wall?
What chirp of gold is that on morning's wing?
What voice of God out from the dawn to call
The music and the beauty of the spring?

And why should spring come into Wall Street's valley?
No roses and no daffodils show gold;
The smothered skies slide by the peaks and towers,
But in the gloom a whistle in that alley
Makes bells across the frosty April cold,
And music sings on as among the flowers.

Edwin Curran

CITY WINDOWS

Tier upon tier
Cell upon tiny cell,
They rise in the night,
Glowing amber against a somber sky
Like monstrous honeycombs.

Honeycombs! That's what they are,
Those lights from city windows
Ranged so compactly in the hive,
Street after crowded street.

Honeycomb packed with the essence
Of human desires;
With a wild tang of unrestraint,
With a bitter tang of hate, yes,
But mostly with the rich, sweet harvest
Of your hearts, O men and women:
Of the unguessed flowers of cities.

Charlton Lawrence Edholm

"IN THE CITIES"

I

In the cities no longer the blaring of trumpets that summon to battle;
From splendid towers the banners flash not forth in the breeze;
No longer the ringing of war-bells, and the clattering of horsemen,

The clangor of sword on shield, nor the cries of the feudal fighters
Hurrying into the streets to strike with bullet and steel;
Clamoring, battering down; assailing high walls and towers,
Rushing maddened, furious, to the killing of fellow-men.

II

Yet still a clangor of bells and a loud, shrill whistling and shouting,
But the sharp, quick sounds that startle proclaim not anger but mercy.
For now, like winds and thunders, flash by the glittering engines,
And the wagons, with ladders and axes, laden with well-trained men
Eager to quench the flame, to scale the dangerous battlements;
Eager to risk their lives in the hissing blaze and the smoke
That blinds, and that grips the throat like the throttling hand of murder.

III

On come the engines and wagons, and the Chief in his hooting chariot,
And a boy, who hears them careering, rushes out to the crossing of ways,
And, swinging his arms and shouting, clears a path for the shrieking engines,

That rush like winds and thunders down a vale of death and destruction —
And every man, at his post, on the winds of the human tempest,
Mad for the saving of lives of men and of women and children —
To creep to the edge of death, to swing in dizzying chasms,
To save the children of strangers, forgetting their own in their madness;
And then if a comrade fall, how wild each man to the rescue,
Plunging into the pit, poisoned, choked, unconscious;
Revived, they struggle back 'gainst their officers' yelled commandings —
Mad, mad, mad, for the saving of human life.

And now, in the days of peace, no squadron charging by,
But hark! down the street a sharp reiterant stroke and clamor,
A rhythmic beating of hoofs, a galloping louder, closer,
And again a youth leaps quick to the crossing of crowded ways,
And he swings his arms and shouts, and clears, through the human currents,
A path for the ringing ambulance, hurrying, hurrying, hurrying
To a place where a child has fallen, is wounded nigh unto death,

That the child may be tenderly lifted and skillfully
nursed and tended —
Engine and hurrying ambulance screaming, ringing,
impatient,
Filling the frightened streets with echoes of old-
time wars,
Laden with men of might, skilled and fierce and de-
termined —
Not as of old to maim, to harry and scatter destruc-
tion;
Not to take life, but to save it; not to kill, but to res-
cue the perishing.

Richard Watson Gilder

NOON HOUR — LOWER BROADWAY

From walls that cage and desks that hold,
From pencil, page and pen,
From slaving task and lust for gold
That soil the souls of men,
An hour's release, one golden hour!
And then — the toil again.

Stenographer and stooped-back clerk,
Where towering buildings gleam,
Pass up and down and up and down
A ceaseless, restless stream,
As if each roamed some wistful road
Amid a world of dream.

And then a clock tolls out the hour!
The little time is done!

A crumpled dream the open sky
And singing wind and sun!
Back, back into the frowning halls
They enter one by one.

Poor foolish dreamers of an hour!
The savants may despise
For visions that can fill your hearts
And light your work-tired eyes,
And yet — who knows what paths are yours,
What Paradise?

Edmund Leamy

IN A PARK

When all the city is a mist of jewel-spangled dark,
When day is over, and the night goes by on stealthy feet;
When traffic sounds seem strangely soft — the distance makes them sweet —
We sit together, you and I, two shadows in the park.

Sometimes we talk and plan a bit, sometimes our fingers touch,
And whisper dear remembered things we are too shy to say;
And then it is that all the world seems centuries away,
And then it is that nothing hurts, and nothing matters — much.

The disappointments we have known, the wasted
lonely hours,
The hopes that died too soon, the words that
might have gone unsaid,
The dreams that were such fragile things, the hap-
piness that fled,
And these are nothing . . . for the breeze has crept
past drowsy flowers.

Dim people pass us in the dusk, slow walking close
together,
A great clock strikes, but mellowly, across the
city squares;
And oh, your hand is tight on mine — and no one
knows or cares —
For lovers always are a part of June's enchanted
weather.

Margaret E. Sangster

A STREET CRY

O now the heavenly daffodils
Their yellow lamps have lit;
And vendors take the golden spoil,
The streets are bright with it:
And baskets brimmed as they can hold
Are precious with the April gold.

Here's daffodils! I hear them cry
Along the noisy way;
There's winter in the air and sky,
The city streets are grey;

But like a hope and prophecy,
The yellow flowers flame for me.

Here's daffodils! O somewhere now
The earliest dreams awake;
Dim stirrings vex the sleeping bough
For unborn April's sake;
And gardens patient in the snow
The thrill of tender promise know.

And weary folk that waited long
Look up and hope again.
In the dumb spaces like a song
The old cry echoes plain;
New wine the empty chalice fills,
And for a sign — here's daffodils!

Arthur Ketchum

THE WATCHMAN

The watchman walked the little streets
With slow and steady tread;
He slung his lantern as he went, —
"All's well!" the watchman said.

Behind close blinds a woman sat
Who had no more to sell;
The watchman paused before her door, —
"All's well!" he cried, "All's well!"

An old man shivered in the dark
Who had no bread to eat;

Echoed the watchman's cry, "All's well!"
Along the empty street.

The watchman passed a silent house
Wherein a child had died;
A candle burned against the pane, —
"All's well!" the watchman cried.

And through the night the watchman passed
With slow and steady tread;
And ever to the little streets
"All's well!" the watchman said.

Miriam Vedder

A STREET MOTHER

My eyes were staring high
Aloft for dreams of rapture and of awe,
And she — she passed me by
Before I saw!

A roaring gulch of fire
The street, — and brilliant stars possessed its skies.
But purer with their passionate desire,
Her dauntless eyes!

The profile calm and strong,
Yet wistful with the hint of alien race . . .
Oh, like a battle-song
Her thrilling face!

The coarse, dark hair above the tawdry shawl,
The mothering bosom where her baby clung, —
And all the burden of her life, with all
Her blood so young!

Her face uplifted in the blue arc-light,
She moved with that high courage none would mark, —
Turned at the corner, wonderful and bright
Against the dark, —

And, as her grave lips parted, and her eyes
Sought her child's eyes with whispers soft and sweet,
All the proud stars, the vast imperial skies
Swooned at her feet!

William Rose Benét

TRINITY CHURCHYARD

Where the pulse of Wall Street beats,
Where the money changers go;
Where along the noisy streets
Runs the life tide, to and fro —
Busy life of old Broadway,
With its restless human sea —
Here I stop and muse to-day,
By the graves of Trinity.

Those beneath these quiet stones
One unending Sabbath keep,
And the great wheels jar their bones,
But they may not mar their sleep.

And they murmur not at all,
Morning, noon and night-time pass,
Rain and sun, and snow-flakes fall,
Careless footsteps tread the grass.

Childish fingers press the graves,
But these peaceful sleepers lie
(What a worry dying saves!)
Quiet under every sky.
Twittering bird and whispering elm!
Bird and dead man, each care free —
Here's long peace to both of them.
Citizens of Trinity!

Joseph Dana Miller

IN CITY STREETS

Yonder in the heather there's a bed for sleeping,
Drink for one athirst, ripe blackberries to eat;
Yonder in the sun the merry hares go leaping,
And the pool is clear for travel-wearied feet.

Sorely throb my feet, a-tramping London highways,
(Ah! the springy moss upon a northern moor!)
Through the endless streets, the gloomy squares and byways,
Homeless in the city, poor among the poor!

London streets are gold — ah, give me leaves a-glinting
'Midst gray dykes and hedges in the autumn sun!

London water's wine, poured out for all unstinting —
God! For the little brooks that tumble as they run!

Oh, my heart is fain to hear the soft wind blowing,
Soughing through the fir-tops up on northern fells!
Oh, my eye's an ache to see the brown burns flowing
Through the peaty soil and tinkling heather-bells.

Ada Smith

IN TOWN

I LOVE you in the vehement life of town,
The pulsing high-ways, the gay market places:
The masque of various players, king and clown,
Philosopher and fool: the passing faces;
The sense of brotherhood with all I meet.
I love you in the wonder of night's falling,
The blossoming of lights in every street,
The pearl-shell sky, pale rivers, voices calling
The news of town: the homeward pressing throng,
The gay shop windows with their varied treasure;
Street melody, a snatch of careless song,
Lovers arm-linked, the carnival of pleasure.

O ardent soul, my friend, the town is dear
Because in every street I feel you near.

W. M. Letts

THE PUSH CART

Colors like cries of delight from the lips of a child
Leapt from a cart by the curb of a corner I passed.
The oars of a golden galley dipped swirling through seas
Of azure and opal. The ancient Hesperides
Lifted for landfall, and loud with the heroes I laughed!

Blinded by blue we staggered ashore on a strand
Of golden sand to the gorgeous gardens their gate,
Where beautiful birds trilled embowered — but bright in midsward,
Burnished of scale and claw, crouched Ladon, to guard
The Fruit and the footing of maidens that minstreled its fate.

And, dispersing this dream, still another, — bright Bagdad's bazaars
With the slow-footed camels from Yemen that languidly glide,
And, in turban and caftan, some retinue of the viziers,
Black eunuchs with cimeters, guards with their glimmering spears
Round the litters of houris close-veiled to the harem who ride

Where some banquet is spread to bedazzle the eyes
of a djinn,
Where the hues of piled peaches, of apricots, pome-
granates, plums
And oranges, flicker like heaps of such jewels as
blazed
From Sinbad's deep Valley of Diamonds, turning
him crazed!
Giant blacks draw the curtains apart — and the
great Caliph comes!

Old proser in charge of your push cart, — ye gods,
if you knew
The grandeurs of purple and gold and rich crimson
you sell
"Two for five — three for five," with a grin and a
greasy swart hand,
As you chatter and shrug with the boy of the boot-
blacking stand, —
Why, your button-black eyes would grow bulging!
. . . Perhaps 'tis as well!

You'd be sure to go treading on clouds till, like him
on the Field
Of Mars, that a cloud took and rapt from the sight
of his age,
You were snatched to Olympus, and, mopping your
oily brown brow,
Wheeled your cart up the heights where the White
Oves abide even now, —
Till, at sight of you, gaily they sped Ganymede as a
page

And haled you before them! Ambrosia and nectar
forgot
I can see them uprisen as one all to pillage your
trove.
Now, superb o'er your overturned cart (having feasted
their fill)
They are pelting each other with splendors adown the
green hill,
They are chairing you up to a seat between Juno and
Jove!

William Rose Benét

LILACS IN THE CITY

Amid the rush and fever of the street,
The snarl and clash of countless quarrelling bells,
And the sick, heavy heat,
The hissing footsteps, and the hateful smells,
I found you, speaking quietly
Of sunlit hill-horizons and clean earth;
While the pale multitude that may not dare
To pause and live a moment, lest they die,
Swarmed onward with hot eyes, and left you
there —
An armful of God's glory, nothing worth.

You are more beautiful than I can know.
Even one loving you might gaze an hour
Nor learn the perfect flow
Of line and tint in one small, purple flower.
There are no two of you the same,

And every one is wonderful and new —
Poor baby-blossoms that have died unblown,
And you that droop yourselves as if for shame,
You too are perfect. I had hardly known
The grace of your glad sisters but for you

You myriad of little litanies!
Not as our bitter piety, subdued
To cold creed that denies,
Or lying law that severs glad and good;
But like a child's eyes, after sleep
Uplifted; like a girl's first wordless prayer
Close-held by him who loves her — no distress
Nor storm of supplication, but a deep,
Dear heartache of such utter happiness
As only utter piety can bear.

For you are all the robin feels at dawn;
The meaning of green dimness, and calm noons
On high fields far withdrawn,
Where the haze glimmers and the wild bee croons.
You are the soul of a June night: —
Intimate joy of moon-swept vale and glade,
Warm fragrance breathing upward from the ground,
And eager winds tremulous with sharp delight
Till all the tense-tuned gloom thrills like a sound —
Mystery of sweet passion unafraid.

O sweet, sweet, sweet! You are the proof of all
That over-truth our dreams have memory of

That day cannot recall:
Work without weariness, and tearless love,
And taintless laughter. While we run
To measure dust, and sounding names are hurled
Into the nothingness of days unborn,
You hold your little hearts up to the sun,
Quietly beautiful amid our scorn —
God's answer to the wisdom of this world.

Brian Hooker

THE LIGHTS

Ten thousand jewels flash out
When the darkness of night appears;
But O I sometimes think these pearls
Are ten thousand people's tears —

Ten thousand tears that are shed
Through the terrible strife of the day,
And doomed to shine through the city's night
Till the stars have faded away.

Charles Hanson Towne

IN THE STREET

Walking among the crowd, where faces shift
As in a great kaleidoscope, — some bright
With pleasure's gleam of evanescent light,
Some dull with vague despairs, some that uplift
The radiance of a vision ere they fade
And vanish, — as confusedly they pass,

We question of ourselves, "This common mass
Of human life, to what end was it made?"

But think! No jewel out of setting shows
As in its own fit nook. So let us learn
To look upon these various lives, that turn
To one illuming Centre. Lo! each glows
In the full brotherhood of Christ's dear face,
And is, by that relationship divine —
The bond that glorifies your life and mine —
Forever lifted out of commonplace!

Lucy Larcom

FLEET STREET

I NEVER see the newsboys run
Amid the whirling street,
With swift untiring feet,
To cry the latest venture done,
But I expect one day to hear
Them cry the crack of doom
And risings from the tomb,
With great Archangel Michael near;
And see them running from the Fleet
As messengers of God,
With Heaven's tidings shod
About their brave unwearied feet.

Shane Leslie

THE REAR-PORCHES OF AN APARTMENT-BUILDING

A sky that has never known sun, moon or stars:
A sky that is like a dead, kind face
Would have the color of your eyes,
O servant-girl, singing of pear-trees in the sun,
And scraping the yellow fruit you once picked
When your lavender-white eyes were alive. . . .
On the porch above you are two women
Whose faces have the color of brown earth that has never felt rain.
The still wet basins of ponds that have been drained
Are their eyes.
They knit gray rosettes and nibble cakes. . . .
And on the top-porch are three children
Gravely kissing each others' foreheads —
And an ample nurse with a huge red fan. . . .

The passing of the afternoon to them
Is but the lengthening of blue-black shadows on brick walls.

Maxwell Bodenheim

PICCADILLY

Piccadilly! shops, palaces, bustle, and breeze,
The whirring of wheels, and the murmur of trees,
By daylight, or nightlight, — or noisy, or stilly, —
Whatever my mood is — I love Piccadilly.

Wet nights, when the gas on the pavement is
streaming,
And young Love is watching and old Love is
dreaming,
And Beauty is whirled off to conquest, where shrilly
Cremona makes nimble thy toes, Piccadilly!

Bright days, when we leisurely pace to and fro,
And meet all the people we do or don't know, —
Here is jolly old Brown, and his fair daughter
Lillie, —
No wonder, young pilgrim, you like Piccadilly!

See yonder pair riding, how fondly they saunter!
She smiles on her poet, whose heart is a canter:
Some envy her spouse, and some covet her filly,
He envies them both — he's an ass, Piccadilly!

Now were I that gay bride, with a slave at my feet,
I would choose me a house in my favorite street;
Yes or no — I would carry my point, willy, nilly,
If 'no,' — pick a quarrel, if 'yes,' — Piccadilly!

From Primrose balcony, long ages ago,
'Old Q' sat at gaze, — who now passes below?
A frolicsome Statesman, the Man of the Day,
A laughing philosopher, gallant and gay;
No darling of Fortune more manfully trod,
Full of years, full of fame, and the world at his nod,
Heu, anni fugaces! The wise and the silly,
Old P or old Q, — we must quit Piccadilly.

Life is checquered, — a patchwork of smiles and of
frowns.
We value its ups, let us muse on its downs;
There's a side that is bright, it will then turn us
t'other, —
One turn, if a good one, deserves such another.
These downs are delightful, *these* ups are not hilly, —
Let us turn one more turn ere we quit Piccadilly.

Frederick Locker-Lampson

THE LETTER

"O, THE spring is sweet in London, Rose; the sun
shines in the Park
Very near as warm and happy as it used to shine
at home —
What's the use of sitting sighing in my bedroom cold
and dark
When there's many a girl will walk with me, if
only asked to come?

"There's lots of pretty faces, Dear, in all this jostling throng,
There's the girls I see at lunch-time in the tea-shop or the street,
And the lady in the boarding-house, who sings me
many a song
In the drawing-room after dinner, O, her voice is
soft and sweet!

"And I haven't always wandered, all alone, with thoughts of you,
And I've kissed sometimes (not often) other lips, my Rose, than yours,
But I'm not a faithless villain — just a lad whose years are few,
And who can't afford to waste them sitting sorrowful indoors.

"Don't think I have forgotten you, so true and good and kind,
It's only that life's different now, a harder thing and strange:
This London alters everything and makes your soul go blind,
And the office work's so tiring, Lord! you long for any change.

"So that's why I write this letter: that you shouldn't think it right
Just because we used to promise things and kiss, in days gone by,
To refuse the other fellows when they come to woo, at sight.
O! London eats your heart and soul — my little Rose, Good-bye."

Douglas Goldring

TO A LITTLE GIRL WATERING A PLANT IN THE WINDOW OF A TENEMENT

Little child, with little hands and feet,
And face much too old;
Above the pavements difficult with heat;
Above the bedlam of the cobbled street;
Above Bought and Sold.

No waterpot of firkins to the brim;
No rose tree to tend;
A sprig of fern, a little leaflet slim,
Out of a fissured teacup helping him
To drink, like a friend.

Yet in thy heart I read thee far away,
In lands overseas;
Thou art a princess reigning in Cathay,
Whom dusky slaves and courtiers obey,
And kings hope to please.

Mayhap but now thou art alone, and free
To roam thy demesne;
Mayhap dost seek the haunt most dear to thee,
The hidden garden by the cypress tree
None other has seen.

Where lies a pond of lilies, in the gloom,
With drops of blue sky;
Where drift pale petals of unspared perfume,

And Juno's peacocks prink and boast and plume,
And winds softly sigh.

Where, as thou comest, fragrant evening lies,
With scarce filled-out sails;
Down steps of rose the drowsy daylight dies;
Behind dark trees Diana mounts the skies,
And wake nightingales.

Where music floats, in ever widening rings,
Soft, from far away;
From cool, white hands that fondle muted strings,
And mingle melody with hearts and things
They alone can say.

But as thou kneelest, breathless, in the shade,
Lovely, with thy hair . . .
Against thy realm are enemies arrayed;
A burst of discord makes the dream to fade
At once into the air.

. . . . . .

O little child, whose world is on the street,
Dirty and defiled,
Go down thy dreams with little hands and feet;
God give thy garden somewhere thou shalt meet, —
Not here . . . little child.

Benjamin R. C. Low

THE TICKET-SELLER

All day the crowds go up and down by me
And slip their dirty coins across the glass,
And mutter, "Two," or "Three."
I see their hands — just hands — and then they pass.

I tear long strips of green, and sort the change,
And stack bright metal columns on the board,
Seldom the face that comes within my range
Amid the horde.
I watch the hands; I do not lift my eyes,
But fix them on the grasping fingers . . . so.

Once I beheld the soft white hand of Love,
A hand all made for lips, made to be kissed,
And glancing thru the wicket up above,
I saw — a grey-robed sister, floating by in a shroud-like mist.

They take the small green slips and then
They go, a motley mass of unknown men.
Here mothers come, and maids, and pass again;
Here murderers, perhaps, upon whose hands
The secret blood invisible still lingers,
And here a laborer, fresh from foreign lands,
Gripping a spade . . . but with an artist's fingers.

Archie Austin Coates

THE TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

No Malory of old romance,
  No Crusoe tale, it seems to me,
Can equal in rich circumstance
  This telephone directory.

No ballad of fair ladies' eye,
  No legend of proud knights and dames,
Can fill me with such bright surmise
  As this great book of numbered names!

How many hearts and lives unknown,
  Rare damsels pining for a squire,
Are waiting for the telephone
  To ring, and call them to the wire.

Some wait to hear a loved voice say
  The news they will rejoice to know
At Rome 2637 J
  Or Marathon 1450!

And some, perhaps, are stung with fear
  And answer with reluctant tread:
The message they expect to hear
  Means life or death or daily bread.

A million hearts here wait our call,
  All naked to our distant speech —
I wish that I could ring them all
  And have some welcome news for each.

Christopher Morley

CLERKENWELL

Deep in the town a window smiles —
  You shall not find it, though you seek;
But over many bricky miles
  It draws me through the wearing week.
Its panes are dim, its curtains grey.
  It shows no heartsome shine at dusk;
For gas is dear, and factory pay
Makes small display:
On the small wage she earns she dare not be too gay!

A loud saloon flings golden light
  Athwart the wet and greasy way,
Where, every happy Sunday night,
  We meet in mood of holiday.
She wears a dress of claret glow
  That's thinly frothed with bead and lace.
She buys this lace in Jasmine Row,
A spot, you know,
Where luxuries of lace for a mere nothing go.

I love the shops that flare and lurk
  In the big street whose lamps are gems,
For there she stops when off to work
  To covet silks and diadems.
At evenings, too, the organ plays
  "My Hero" or "In Dixie Land";
And in the odored purple haze,
Where naphthas blaze,
The grubby little girls the dust of dancing raise.

Thomas Burke

OVER THE GREAT CITY

Over the great city,
Where the wind rustles through the parks and gardens,
In the air, the high clouds brooding,
In the lines of street perspective, the lamps, the traffic,
The pavements and the innumerable feet upon them,
I AM: make no mistake — do not be deluded.

Think not because I do not appear at the first glance — because the centuries have gone by and there is no assured tidings of me — that therefore I am not there.
Think not because all goes on its own way that therefore I do not go my own way through all.

The fixed bent of hurrying faces in the street — each turned towards its own light, seeing no other — yet I am the Light towards which they all look.
The toil of so many hands to such multifarious ends, yet my hand knows the touch and twining of them all.

All come to me at last.
There is no love like mine;
For all other love takes one and not another;
And other love is pain, but this is joy eternal.

Edward Carpenter

NEXT DOOR

We saw the tapers burn
In the home so close to ours;
But however our hearts might yearn,
We dared not send our flowers.
"He will not understand," we said,
"Our loving thoughts of his loved dead."

O City! thus you hide
The pity in every heart!
Those who are at our side
You sunder a world apart.
A little barrier built of stone —
And my neighbor grieves — alone, alone!

Charles Hanson Towne

CHICAGO

Smoke and tawny air;
Bricks blurred with black,
Softened with dusk,
Edges clouded with smoke —
Great human things, beautiful with ugliness,
Gripping our hearts because you are so big
and clumsy and kind,
Going with dream-misted eyes:
Tenderly you take our love, with welcome,
Coarse and strong and friendly.

Helen Hoyt

A PRAYER

Dear God in Heaven of your pity
Help the poor children of the city:
The little youngsters of the slums
To whom Your blessing rarely comes:
The little tots who run and play
In crowded, dirty streets each day:
Who dream not song of bird and tree
Nor star and field and sighing sea:
Who are denied and do not know
Their birthright of the long ago,
The clean, sweet wind, the grimeless sun,
Wide spaces, health, and wholesome fun.
Oh, help them that at last they find
And know You, good and dear and kind:
That each wee heart may thrill and sing
With happiness and wondering.
And keep them ever in your ken,
Safe from all hurt and harm. Amen.

Edmund Leamy

IN A CAFÉ

For all the glare of the lights
  That seem to have nothing hidden,
The ancient luminous shadows
  Come here, even here, unbidden.

The music is overloud,
  And the laughter is like to cries,

But the old significant silences
Sometimes conquer and rise.

I sense in these futile revels
The desire of the race,
And an unattainable beauty
On each weary or wanton face.

Here where all folly is loud,
And is spread for all to see,
I am ever surely aware
Of wisdom and mystery.

Shaemas O Sheel

THOMPSON'S LUNCH ROOM— GRAND CENTRAL STATION

STUDY IN WHITES

WAX-WHITE —
Floor, ceiling, walls.
Ivory shadows
Over the pavement
Polished to cream surfaces
By constant sweeping.
The big room is coloured like the petals
Of a great magnolia,
And has a patina
Of flower bloom
Which makes it shine dimly
Under the electric lamps.
Chairs are ranged in rows

Like sepia seeds
Waiting fulfilment.
The chalk-white spot of a cook's cap
Moves unglossily against the vaguely bright wall —
Dull chalk-white striking the retina like a blow
Through the wavering uncertainty of steam.
Vitreous-white of glasses with green reflections,
Ice-green carboys, shifting — greener, bluer — with
the jar of moving water.
Jagged green-white bowls of pressed glass
Rearing snow-peaks of chipped sugar
Above the lighthouse-shaped castors
Of grey pepper and grey-white salt.
Grey-white placards: "Oyster Stew, Cornbeef Hash,
Frankfurters":
Marble slabs veined with words in meandering
lines.
Dropping on the white counter like horn notes
Through a web of violins,
The flat yellow lights of oranges,
The cube-red splashes of apples
In high plated *épergnes*.
The electric clock jerks every half-minute:
"Coming! — Past!"
"Three beef-steaks and a chicken-pie,"
Bawled through a slide while the clock jerks heavily.
A man carries a china mug of coffee to a distant
chair.
Two rice puddings and a salmon salad
Are pushed over the counter;
The unfulfilled chairs open to receive them.

A spoon falls upon the floor with the impact of
metal striking stone,
And the sound throws across the room
Sharp, invisible zigzags
Of silver.

Amy Lowell

SONNETS IN A BOARDING-HOUSE

I

Each morn she crackles upward, tread by tread,
All apprehensive of some hideous sight:
Perhaps the Fourth Floor Back, who reads in bed,
Forgot his gas and let it burn all night —
The Sweet Young Thing who has the middle room,
She much suspects: for once some ink was spilled,
And then the plumber, in an hour of gloom,
Found all the bathroom pipes with tea-leaves filled.

No League of Nations scheme can make her gay —
She knows the rank duplicity of man;
Some folks expect clean towels every day,
They'll get away with murder if they can!
She tacks a card (alas, few roomers mind it),
Please leave the tub as you would wish to find it!

II

Men lodgers are the best, the Mrs. said:
They don't use my gas jets to fry sardines,
They don't leave red-hot irons on the spread,

They're out all morning, when a body cleans.
A man ain't so secretive, never cares
What kind of private papers he leaves lay,
So I can get a line on his affairs
And dope out whether he is likely pay.
But women! Say, they surely get my bug!
They stop their keyholes up with chewing gum,
Spill grease, and hide the damage with the rug,
And fry marshmallows when their callers come.
They always are behindhand with their rents —
Take my advice and let your rooms to gents!

Christopher Morley

SKYSCRAPER

By day the skyscraper looms in the smoke and sun and has a soul.

Prairie and valley, streets of the city, pour into it and they mingle among its twenty floors and are poured out again back to the streets, prairies and valleys.

It is the men and women, boys and girls so poured in and out all day that give the building a soul of dreams and thoughts and memories.

(Dumped in the sea or fixed in a desert, who would care for the building or speak its name or ask a policeman the way to it?)

Elevators slide on their cables and tubes catch letters and parcels and iron pipes carry gas and water in and sewage out.

Wires climb with secrets, carry light and carry words, and tell terrors and profits and loves — curses of men grappling plans of business and questions of women in plots of love.

Hour by hour the caissons reach down to the rock of the earth and hold the building to a turning planet.

Hour by hour the girders play as ribs and reach out and hold together the stone walls and floors.

Hour by hour the hand of the mason and the stuff of the mortar clinch the pieces and parts to the shape an architect voted.

Hour by hour the sun and the rain, the air and the rust, and the press of time running into centuries, play on the building inside and out and use it.

Men who sunk the pilings and mixed the mortar are laid in graves where the wind whistles a wild song without words

And so are men who strung the wires and fixed the pipes and tubes and those who saw it rise floor by floor.

Souls of them all are here, even the hod carrier begging at back doors hundreds of miles away and the bricklayer who went to state's prison for shooting another man while drunk.

(One man fell from a girder and broke his neck at the end of a straight plunge — he is here — his soul has gone into the stones of the building.)

On the office doors from tier to tier — hundreds of names and each name standing for a face written across with a dead child, a passionate lover, a driving ambition for a million dollar business or a lobster's ease of life.

Behind the signs on the doors they work and the walls tell nothing from room to room.

Ten-dollar-a-week stenographers take letters from corporation officers, lawyers, efficiency engineers, and tons of letters go bundled from the building to all ends of the earth.

Smiles and tears of each office girl go into the soul of the building just the same as the mastermen who rule the building.

Hands of clocks turn to noon hours and each floor empties its men and women who go away and eat and come back to work.

Toward the end of the afternoon all work slackens and all jobs go slower as the people feel day closing on them.

One by one the floors are emptied . . . The uniformed elevator men are gone. Pails clang . . . Scrubbers work, talking in foreign tongues. Broom and water and mop clean from the floors human dust and spit, and machine grime of the day.

Spelled in electric fire on the roof are words telling miles of houses and people where to buy a thing for money. The sign speaks till midnight.

Darkness in the hallways. Voices echo. Silence holds . . . Watchmen walk slow from floor to floor and try the doors. Revolvers bulge from their hip pockets . . . Steel safes stand in corners. Money is stacked in them.

A young watchman leans at a window and sees the lights of barges butting their way across a harbor, nets of red and white lanterns in a railroad yard, and a span of glooms splashed with lines of white and blurs of crosses and clusters over the sleeping city.

By night the skyscraper looms in the smoke and the stars and has a soul.

Carl Sandburg

FROM AN "L" TRAIN WINDOW

I saw bent figures toiling in a dusk
That seemed beyond the reaches of the Day,
Pinched faces at the grimy window squares,
Youth turned to something wracked and old and gray.

I had left sunshine on my study floor,
Laughter behind me in a woman's eyes,
Paintings and books and friendly smiling things,
The sum of which is mortal paradise.

Yet here in that same world bent figures toiled
From gloomy windows to the deeps of gloom,
Thin-fingered women, sad as prisoners,
Plied glinting needles in a coffin'd room.

The Quarter Lodgers, sprawled upon a bench,
Read crumpled papers in the half-slain light,
Draining the sordid romance of the press,
Finding some little comfort from their plight.

And then a child, with eyes to break my heart,
Leaned from a window and with hands that shook
Poured water on a dead geranium —
And that alone was worth a wise man's book.

End o' the line, the lifting overhead,
As in a graveyard costly shafts are wrought,
The House of Government, white to the sun,
And in one room a fat man, doing naught.

Dana Burnet

HOLINESS

If all the carts were painted gay,
And all the streets swept clean,
And all the children came to play
By hollyhocks, with green
Grasses to grow between,

If all the houses looked as though
Some hearts were in their stones,
If all the people that we know
Were dressed in scarlet gowns,
With feathers in their crowns,

I think this gaiety would make
A spiritual land.

I think that holiness would take
This laughter by the hand,
Till both should understand.

John Drinkwater

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

I DREAM the Titans came by night
And stretched this most majestic span;
Surely such symmetry, such height,
Such girder-grip, such cable-might,
Were never joined by man!

Or was it out of nothing brought
By some Aladdin's lamp or ring?
Or through some stainless magic wrought,
This masterly-embodied thought,
This super-human thing?

Clinton Scollard

THE CITY

WHEN, sick of all the sorrow and distress
That flourished in the City like foul weeds,
I sought blue rivers and green, opulent meads,
And leagues of unregarded loneliness
Whereon no foot of man had seemed to press,
I did not know how great had been my needs,
How wise the woodland's gospel and her creeds,
How good her faith to one long comfortless.

But in the silence came a Voice to me;
In every wind it murmured, and I knew
It would not cease though far my heart might roam.
It called me in the sunrise and the dew,
At noon and twilight, sadly, hungrily,
The jealous City, whispering always —
"Home!"

Charles Hanson Towne.

NEW YORK

She is hot to the sea that crouches beside,
Human and hot to the cool stars peering down,
My passionate city, my quivering town,
And her dark blood, tide upon purple tide,
With throbs as of thunder beats,
With leaping rhythms and vast, is swirled
Through the shaken lengths of her veinèd streets —
She pulses, the heart of a world!

I have thrilled with her ecstasy, agony, woe —
Hath she a mood that I do not know?
The winds of her music tumultuous have seized me and swayed me,
Have lifted, have swung me around
In their whirls as of cyclonic sound;
Her passions have torn me and tossed me and brayed me;
Drunken and tranced and dazzled with visions and gleams,

I have spun with her dervish priests;
I have searched to the souls of her haunted beasts
And found love sleeping there;
I have soared on the wings of her flashing dreams;
I have sunk with her dull despair;
I have sweat with her travails and cursed with her pains;
I have swelled with her foolish pride;
I have raged through a thick red mist at one with her branded Cains,
With her broken Christs have died.

O beautiful half-god city of visions and love!
O hideous half-brute city of hate!
O wholly human and baffled and passionate town!
The throes of thy burgeoning, stress of thy fight,
Thy bitter, blind struggle to gain for thy body a soul,
I have known, I have felt, and been shaken thereby!
Wakened and shaken and broken,
For I hear in thy thunders terrific that throb through thy rapid veins
The beat of the heart of a world.

Don Marquis

THE TRAM[1]

Humming and creaking, the car down the street
Lumbered and lurched through thunderous gloam

[1] From *Borderlands and Thoroughfares*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Bearing us, spent and dumb with the heat,
From office and counter and factory home:

Sallow-faced clerks, genteel in black;
Girls from the laundries, draggled and dank;
Ruddy-faced laborers slouching slack;
A broken actor, grizzled and lank;

A mother with querulous babe on her lap;
A schoolboy whistling under his breath;
An old man crouched in a dreamless nap;
A widow with eyes on the eyes of death;

A priest, a sailor with deep-sea gaze;
A soldier in scarlet and waxed moustache;
A drunken trollop in velvet and lace;
All silent in that tense dusk . . . when a flash

Of lightning shivered the sultry gloom:
With a shattering brattle the whole sky fell
About us, and rapt to a dazzling doom
We glided on in a timeless spell,

Unscathed through deluge and flying fire
In a magical chariot of streaming glass,
Cut off from our kind and the world's desire,
Made one by the awe that had come to pass.

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

IN THE CITY

Sudden amid the slush and rain
I know not how, I know not why
A rose unfolds within my brain,
And all the world is at July.

A trumpet sounds, green surges splash
And daffodils dance in the sun;
Through tears fair pictures flit and splash
Upon the city's background dim.

Women are true and men are good,
Concord sleeps at the heart of strife,
How sweet is human brotherhood,
And all the daily common life!

Israel Zangwill

FROM THE WOOLWORTH TOWER[1]

Vivid with love, eager for greater beauty
Out of the night we came
Into the corridor, brilliant and warm.
A metal door slides open,
And the lift receives us.
Swiftly, with sharp unswerving flight
The car shoots upward,
And the air, swirling and angry,

[1] From *Rivers to the Sea*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Howls like a hundred devils.
Past the maze of trim bronze doors,
Steadily we ascend.
I cling to you
Conscious of the chasm under us,
And a terrible whirring deafens my ears.

The flight is ended.

We pass through a door leading onto the ledge —
Wind, night and space!
Oh terrible height,
Why have we sought you?
Oh bitter wind with icy invisible wings,
Why do you beat us?
Why would you bear us away?
We look through the miles of air,
The cold blue miles between us and the city,
Over the edge of eternity we look
On all the lights,
A thousand times more numerous than the stars;
Oh lines and loops of light in unwound chains
That mark for miles and miles
The vast black mazy cobweb of the streets;
Near us clusters and splashes of living gold
That change far off to bluish steel
Where the fragile lights on the Jersey shore
Tremble like drops of wind-stirred dew.
The strident noises of the city
Floating up to us
Are hallowed into whispers.

Ferries cross through the darkness
Weaving a golden thread into the night,
Their whistles weird shadows of sound.

We feel the millions of humanity beneath us, —
The warm millions, moving under the roofs,
Consumed by their own desires;
Preparing food,
Sobbing alone in a garret,
With burning eyes bending over a needle,
Aimlessly reading the evening paper,
Dancing in the naked light of the café,
Laying out the dead,
Bringing a child to birth —
The sorrow, the torpor, the bitterness, the frail
joy
Come up to us
Like a cold fog wrapping us round.
Oh in a hundred years
Not one of these blood-warm bodies
But will be worthless as clay.
The anguish, the torpor, the toil
Will have passed to other millions
Consumed by the same desires.
Ages will come and go,
Darkness will blot the lights
And the tower will be laid on the earth.
The sea will remain
Black and unchanging,
The stars will look down
Brilliant and unconcerned.

Beloved,
Tho' sorrow, futility, defeat
Surround us,
They cannot bear us down.
Here on the abyss of eternity
Love has crowned us
For a moment
Victors.

Sara Teasdale

BROADWAY[1]

How like the stars are these white, nameless faces!
These far innumerable burning coals!
This pale procession out of stellar spaces,
This Milky Way of souls!
Each in its own bright nebulæ enfurled,
Each face, dear God, a world!

I fling my gaze out through the silent night —
In those far stars, what gardens, what high halls,
Has mortal yearning built for its delight,
What chasms and what walls?
What quiet mansions where a soul may dwell?
What Heaven and what Hell?

Hermann Hagedorn

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[1] From *Poems and Ballads*. Used by permission of the author and The Macmillan Company, publishers.

CITY TREES

The trees along this city street,
Save for the traffic and the trains,
Would make a sound as thin and sweet
As trees in country lanes.

And people standing in their shade
Out of a shower, undoubtedly
Would hear such music as is made
Upon a country tree.

Oh, little leaves that are so dumb
Against the shrieking city air,
I watch you when the wind has come, —
I know what sound is there.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

THE APARTMENT HOUSE

Severe against the pleasant arc of sky
The great stone box is cruelly displayed.
The street becomes more dreary from its shade,
And vagrant breezes touch its walls and die.
Here sullen convicts in their chains might lie,
Or slaves toil dumbly at some dreary trade.
How worse than folly is their labor made
Who cleft the rocks that this might rise on high!

Yet, as I look, I see a woman's face
Gleam from a window far above the street.

This is a house of homes, a sacred place,
By human passion made divinely sweet.
How all the building thrills with sudden grace
Beneath the magic of Love's golden feet!

Joyce Kilmer

A SIDE STREET

On the warm Sunday afternoons
And every evening in the Spring and Summer
When the night hurries the late home-comer
And the air grows softer, and scraps of tunes
Float from the open windows and jar
Against the voices of children and the hum of a car;
When the city noises commingle and melt
With a restless something half-seen, half-felt —
I see them always there,
Upon the low, smooth wall before the church;
That row of little girls who sit and stare
Like sparrows on a granite perch.
They come in twittering couples or walk alone
To their gray bough of stone,
Sometimes by twos and threes, sometimes as many as five —
But always they sit there on the narrow coping
Bright-eyed and solemn, scarcely hoping
To see more than is merely moving and alive. . . .
They hear the couples pass; the lisp of happy feet
Increases and the night grows suddenly sweet. . . .

Before the quiet church that smells of death
They sit.
And Life sweeps past them with a rushing breath
And reaches out and plucks them by the hand
And calls them boldly, whispering to each
In some strange speech
They tremble to but cannot understand.
It thrills and troubles them, as one by one,
The days run off like water through a sieve;
While, with a gaze as candid as the sun,
Poignant and puzzled and inquisitive,
They come and sit, —
A part of life and yet apart from it.

Louis Untermeyer

DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE GOD?

Across the court there rises the back wall
Of the Magna Carta Apartments.
The other evening the people in the apartment
opposite
Had forgotten to draw their curtains.
I could see them dining: the well-blanched cloth,
The silver and glass, the crystal water jug,
The meat and vegetables; and their clean pink
hands
Outstretched in busy gestures.

It was pleasant to watch them, they were so human;
So gay, innocent, unconscious of scrutiny.
They were four: an elderly couple,

A young man, and a girl — with lovely shoulders
Mellow in the glow of the lamp.
They were sitting over coffee, and I could see their
hands talking.

At last the older two left the room.
The boy and girl looked at each other. . . .
Like a flash, they leaned and kissed.

Good old human race that keeps on multiplying!
A little later I went down the street to the movies,
And there I saw all four, laughing and joking
together.
And as I watched them I felt like God —
Benevolent, all-knowing, and tender.

Christopher Morley

THE CITY'S CROWN

What makes a city great? Huge piles of stone
Heaped heavenward? Vast multitudes who
dwell
Within wide circling walls? Palace and throne
And riches past the count of man to tell,
And wide domain? Nay, these the empty husk!
True glory dwells where great deeds are done,
Where great men rise whose names 'thwart the
dusk
Of misty centuries gleam like the sun!
In Athens, Sparta, Florence, 'twas the soul
That was the city's bright immortal part,

The splendor of the spirit was their goal,
Their jewel the incomparable heart!
So may the city that I love be great
Till every stone shall be articulate.

Dudley Foulke

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SELECTED LIST OF URBAN VERSE

Books Comprised Wholly or Mostly of Urban Verse

Ballads of Old New York: Arthur Guiterman (Harper & Bros.).

City Tides: Archie Austin Coates (George H. Doran Company).

Cobblestones: David Sentner (Alfred A. Knopf).

London Lamps: Thomas Burke (Robert M. McBride & Company).

Manhattan: John Myers O'Hara (Smith & Sale).

Manhattan: Charles Hanson Towne (Mitchell Kennerley).

New York, and Other Verse: Frederick Mortimer Clapp (Marshall Jones Company).

Poems of London, and Other Verses: John Presland (The Macmillan Company).

Songs of Manhattan: Morris Abel Beer (Cornhill Company).

Streets: Douglas Goldring (Thomas Seltzer).

The Book of New York Verse: Hamilton Fish Armstrong (G. P. Putnam's Sons).

The Human Fantasy: John Hall Wheelock (Sherman, French & Company).

The Song of the City: Anna Louise Strong (Oak Leaves Company).

Books Containing Some Urban Verse

A Banjo at Armageddon: Berton Braley (George H. Doran Company).

A World of Windows: Charles Hanson Towne (George H. Doran Company).

Breakers and Granite: John Gould Fletcher (The Macmillan Company).

Carmina: T. A. Daly (Harcourt, Brace & Company).

Challenge: Louis Untermeyer (Harcourt, Brace & Company).
Chicago Poems: Carl Sandburg (Henry Holt & Company).
Cornhuskers: Carl Sandburg (Henry Holt & Company).
Flashlights: Mary Aldis (Duffield & Company).
Leaves of Grass: Walt Whitman (David McKay).
Madrigali: T. A. Daly (Harcourt, Brace & Company).
Merchants from Cathay: William Rose Benét (Yale University Press).
Moons of Grandeur: William Rose Benét (George H. Doran Company).
Poems: H. C. Bunner (Charles Scribner's Sons).
Poems: Lionel Johnson (The Macmillan Company).
Poems, 1915: Dana Burnet (Harper & Bros.).
Others: An Anthology of the New Verse (Alfred A. Knopf).
Slabs of the Sunburnt West: Carl Sandburg (Harcourt, Brace & Company).
Smoke and Steel: Carl Sandburg (Harcourt, Brace & Company).
Streets and Faces: Scudder Middleton (The Little Book Publishers).
The Burglar of the Zodiac: William Rose Benét (Yale University Press).
The Falconer of God: William Rose Benét (Yale University Press).
The New Adam: Louis Untermeyer (Harcourt, Brace & Company).
The Quiet Singer: Charles Hanson Towne (Mitchell Kennerley).
The Rocking Horse: Christopher Morley (George H. Doran Company).
These Times: Louis Untermeyer (Henry Holt & Company).
Things as They Are: Berton Braley (George H. Doran Company).
Today and Tomorrow: Charles Hanson Towne (George H. Doran Company).
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